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## TOMORROW

COACHING FOR LIFE  
America's newest growth industry weekend



Commons tirade over sleaze 'stunt'

# Major lets rip at Blair and Ashdown

By Philip Webster and Jill Sherman

JOHN MAJOR unleashed a venomous assault on Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown yesterday that reflected his belief that they had hijacked the final days of Parliament with a stage-managed row over sleaze.

Conservative backbenchers bayed with delight as Mr Major delivered a personal tirade against Mr Blair, accusing him of trading on double standards from the moment he was elected leader, selling policies to the unions, flying on Concorde and failing to declare it, and calling for openness while refusing to publish the secret funds of his private office.

He then turned on the Liberal Democrat leader, telling him that he was ending the Parliament as pious and pompous as he had been

throughout it, and that the attempt led by himself and Mr Blair to force the publication of the Downing report on cash-for-questions had been a stunt. Labour and Liberal Democrats, however, intensified their charges that the Commons was rising today to avoid the Downing report being delivered to MPs next week.

The explosive question-time exchanges came after the interim report on the affair left ten Tories under a cloud of suspicion while clearing 15 MPs — 11 Conservative, three Labour and one Liberal Democrat — of improperly receiving money through their constituency parties from the lobbyist Ian Greer.

But the clash between Mr Major and Mr Blair came over Mr Blair's repeated de-

mands that the Commons should sit on so that the full Downing report could be published. As Mr Major refused to change his plans, Mr Blair declared that his handling of the affair left a stain on the character of his Government. Mr Major retorted that Mr Blair and his front bench were guilty of having "smeared and smeared again".

The Prime Minister was reported by close ministerial friends to be genuinely furious that the sleaze issue had come back to distract attention from good employment figures.

But the way he allowed his pent-up emotions virtually to run out of control in the Commons delighted his backbenchers, and he was given a back-slapping reception in the Commons tea-room.

The mood of Labour MPs as they prepared to leave for the election was perhaps more justifiably upbeat after another poll gave their party a 27-point lead over the Conservatives. They described Mr Major's performance as a "rant" that made him look more like an Opposition leader than a Prime Minister.

To press home their charges that Mr Major had deliberately suspended Parliament early to avoid the Downing publication, the opposition parties tabled a one-clause Bill which would give the Standards and Privileges Committee power to sit until the dissolution on April 8. It will make no progress.

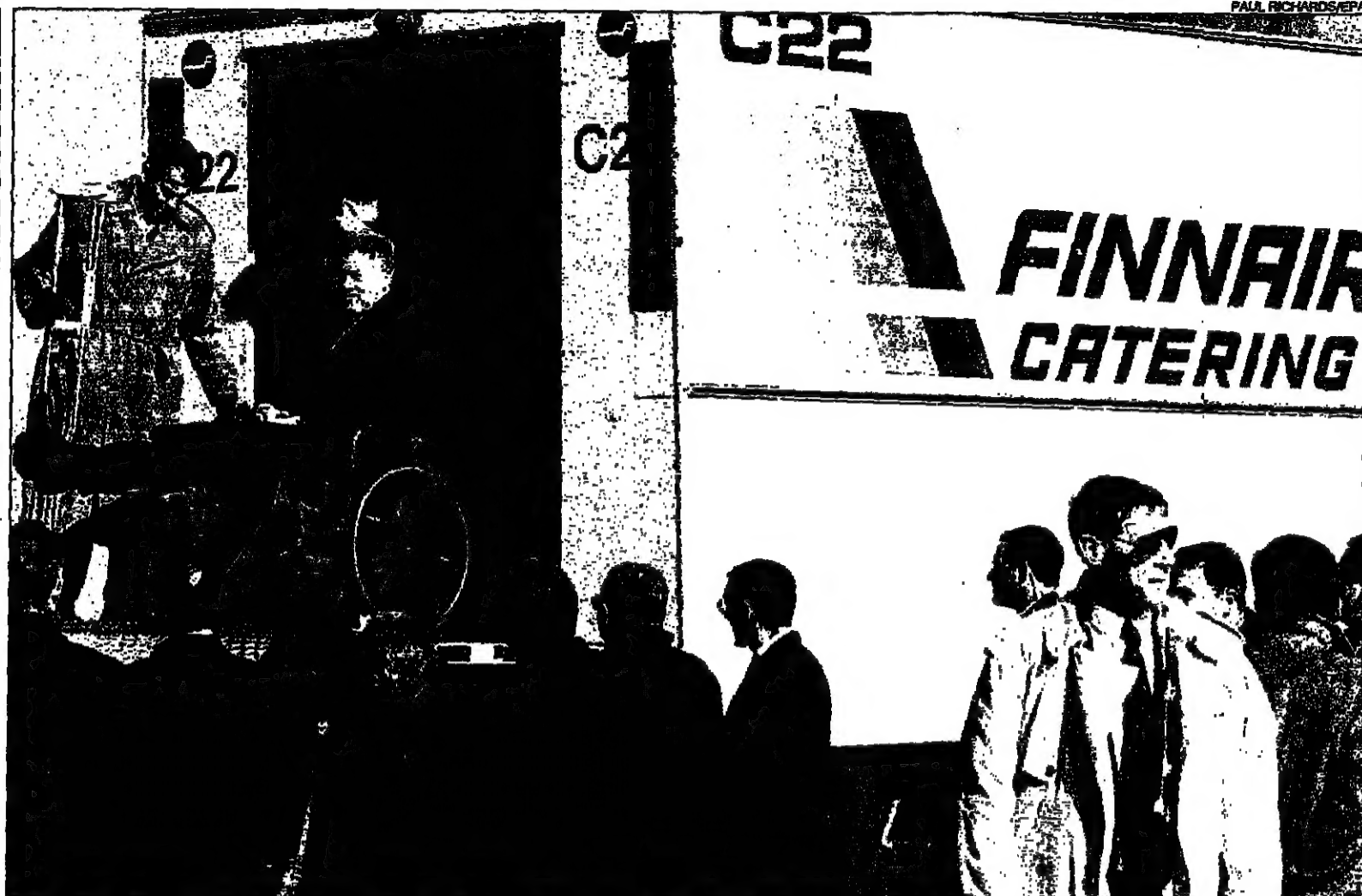
The Cabinet meanwhile put the final touches to the Tories' manifesto for a fifth term. It is reported to be half the length of the 1992 document, although it was slightly enlarged yesterday to include the provisions lost from the education and crime Bills this week.

Ministers will highlight the specific policies lost as an example of the significant differences between the Tory and Labour party. The new additions include proposals for expanding selection and a commitment that grant-maintained schools will be able to set up nurseries, sixth forms and boarding facilities.

The programme will also restore mandatory minimum sentences for repeat burglars and drug dealers.

Senior party sources said the three main themes of the manifesto would be economic stability, social stability and constitutional stability.

Matthew Parris, pages 2, 20  
Televised debate, page 8  
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Leading article and Letters, page 21



President Clinton after being lowered from Air Force One on to a Finnair catering lorry at Helsinki airport yesterday when he arrived for a summit with President Yeltsin. Mr Clinton injured his knee recently in an accident at the golfer Greg Norman's home in Florida. Pages 11, 21

# Councils free to stop providing home help

By Ian Murray  
COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

COUNCILS can stop providing disabled people with home help if their budgets are used up, the House of Lords ruled yesterday.

The Law Lords overturned a Court of Appeal decision that once care had been agreed, it had to be provided however short of money a council became. They backed by a majority of three to two an appeal by Gloucestershire County Council and Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary.

Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead said that a person's need for help "cannot sensibly be assessed without having some regard to the cost. A person's

need for a particular type or level of service cannot be decided in a vacuum from which all considerations of cost have been expelled."

In a dissenting judgment, Lord Lloyd of Berwick blamed Gloucestershire's difficulties on shortage of money from the Government. "The council has escaped from an impossible position in which they and other local authorities have been placed," he said. "Even if the council wished to raise the money to meet the need, it would be unable to do so by reason of Government-imposed rate-capping."

The 1970 Act to provide care for the chronically sick and disabled was a noble aspiration, he said, but the money

had to be found to pay for it. "Having willed the end, Parliament must be asked to provide the means."

The ruling affects all local authorities in England and Wales and people who rely on them for services, including cleaning, shopping and the provision of meals and housekeepers.

The case began in 1994 after Gloucestershire withdrew services from 1,500 residents to save money after the Government required it to cut £25 million from its annual budget. An appeal, backed by the Public Law Project and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, was brought on behalf of Michael Barry, an 81-year-old stroke

victim. Mr Barry had lost his house cleaning and laundry provision because of a shortage of funds, although he kept twice-weekly home visits and meals-on-wheels.

The High Court ruled that it was impractical to expect councils not to make cuts if their budgets were reduced, but that decision was overturned by the Court of Appeal last June.

In yesterday's judgment, Lord Clyde said availability of resources could be a determining factor. "If my resources are limited, I have to need a thing very much before I am satisfied that it is necessary to purchase it," he said.

But Derek Vizer of Voice of the Disabled said: "This deci-

sion is not just tragic for some it will be fatal. Unfortunately the Law Lords don't have to pick these people up off the floor or they would realise what a terrible thing they have done. I am going to take this case on to the Court of Human Rights. The people who are being hurt by this are people who fought for England and now they are old, the country tells them they are too expensive to look after. It was supposed to be a service from the cradle to the grave. The grave is nearer than it was before this judgment."

Age Concern and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation both described the ruling as a devastating blow for thousands of people.

# Ten MPs who have to wait

By Arthur Leathley  
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT AND ANDREW PIERCE

TEN Tory MPs have investigations hanging over them as the Commons rises today for the general election.

A Commons investigation into accusations against 25 MPs failed yesterday to decide on the ten Conservatives, provoking claims that the inquiry was taking too long.

Neil Hamilton, the former Trade Minister, is among the Tory MPs whose cases will not be concluded until at least May, when the new Parliament begins. A huge report into allegations against him will be completed next week, but will not be published until the new House sits.

Mr Hamilton, who is accused of failing to disclose cash payments from Mohamed Al Fayed, chairman of Harrods, complained that the report into the allegations had not been finished. Mr Hamilton, MP for Tatton, said: "I need to be able to clear my name of these false allegations and my constituents need to know that their MP is not a crook."

Among the more serious allegations that have been left pending are those involving Tim Smith, a former Northern Ireland minister, Sir Andrew Bowden, Michael Brown and Sir Michael Grylls.

Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner, published a short interim report yesterday, saying that it was "clearly a



Sir Gordon: regrets delay

matter for regret" that some of his investigations had not been finished. He insisted that failure to conclude reports into some of the allegations did not imply guilt, but that they had been less straightforward than the other 15.

The report cleared 15 MPs of wrongdoing, including Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, after they were accused of failing to declare payments made into their election campaign funds. Most of the MPs are fighting the election campaign, but Sir Michael Grylls is not standing.

Although senior Opposition figures voiced anger at the delays, some of the MPs involved were less irritated by them. Gerald Malone, the Health Minister, facing claims that his constituency association received £1,000 from Ian Greer, the lobbyist, said friends that the delay was "an annoying distraction" that would not affect his campaign.

# Shares suffer year's biggest one-day fall

By Michael Clark, STOCK MARKET CORRESPONDENT

LONDON shares suffered their biggest one-day fall this year, with the FT-SE 100 index of leading stocks closing 74.1 points lower at 4,258.1.

The index stands 186 points down from its all-time closing high on March 11, with all but 20 points of that slump occurring this week after John Major confirmed that the election would be on May 1.

The latest fall was prompted by a warning from Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, that American rates would have to rise to pre-empt a resurgence in inflationary pressures.

The reaction of London dealers illustrates the anxiety of financial markets as the

prolonged election campaign unfolds. Brokers are standing by for a correction of markets that have risen strongly over the past two years.

Yesterday's sell-off happened despite news that UK retail price inflation fell in February. Headline inflation edged lower to 2.7 per cent, from 2.8 per cent in January, while underlying inflation fell from 3.1 per cent to 2.9 per cent.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average fell 50 points before recouping some losses to stand around 35 points lower at midday.

Shares tumble, page 25  
Markets, page 28



## Oporto shooting

The Foreign Office demanded a report from Portuguese police, who fired rubber bullets at Manchester United fans after their 0-0 draw with FC Porto. Page 5

# Big spenders consign the cardigan to history

By Alan Hamilton

AS A men's fashion statement, the woolly cardigan with buttons down the front is as dead as the kipper tie. Now, in a final coup de grace, it has been thrown out as one of Britain's key economic indicators.

For years, cardigans — perhaps best modelled by the singer Val Dorian who went through various styles and shades on his television show — have been one of 600 items whose costs are monitored to compile the monthly retail price index, an important tool used by governments in calculating inflation.

They have been removed from the statistician's shopping basket in favour of a dressier item, chinos — those lightweight casual cotton trousers invented by

an English army officer in India to counter the heat of the midday sun, and now seen in every British weekend summer high street.

Some hazy link fingers in the folk memory between cardigans and light ale; they jointly belong to an age before red braces and computers, when men had time to potter. Light ale and pale ale, once RPI staple indicators, have gone too, replaced in the theoretical but supposedly typical basket by alcopops and draughtflow bitter — those cans of beer with widgets that give them a head.

The Office for National Statistics, which compiles the RPI, said yesterday that the index was constantly updated to reflect market conditions, and what society was doing. It covers a variety of

expenditure, including food, housing, clothes, leisure, motoring, fares and fuel. Among other changes are the arrival of road tolls but the dropping of super-unleaded petrol: not enough people buy it. Two other new, but not surprising, items are in — Internet and cable television subscriptions, and the purchase of CD-ROM computer software.

Significantly, government statisticians have decided fees and subscriptions are now a more important part of the RPI; at the same time, they have downgraded the importance of spending on UK holidays. The simplistic conclusion is that we are surfing the net rather than the ocean's waves. What with all those subscriptions and tolls, small wonder there is nothing left to spend on cardigans.



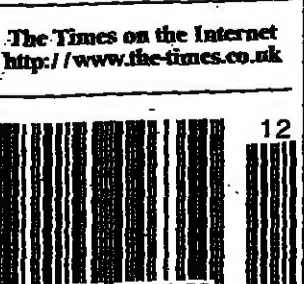
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# Lights flashing, almost out of control: it's end-of-the-road rage

Just when you thought it was safe to return to Westminster... They need to coin a new term for it — "Mace rage" perhaps. As Parliament rises, the Prime Minister simply explodes. Like a bank manager driven beyond endurance, John Major flew off the handle during his final Prime Minister's Questions yesterday, lashing out in all directions. It was less than statesmanlike, it was more than lively: it was awesome.

Major started hitting people almost before anyone

had uttered. He took a swipe at Dennis Skinner, challenging him to quit. He landed a punch on John Prescott (who had not even spoken) accusing him of being in lock to the railway unions. And he accused Paddy Ashdown of finishing the session as he had started it, awash in piety and pomposity.

But it was Tony Blair who caught the full force. Needed by the Labour Leader's accusation that he was conspiring to suppress a Commons watchdog report on alleged sleaze, the Prime Minister began a

bombardment which threatened to keep Parliament sitting until Sunday.

It was like one of those domestic scenes in which some small but ill-judged remark sets a spark to the blue touch-paper — and bang. Everything Mr Major hates about Mr Blair came pouring out. Accused of sweeping corruption under the carpet, the Prime Minister angrily retorted that this was pretty rich, coming from a man who "sells policy to the trade unions for cash".

A sharp riposte. But getting



**MATTHEW PARRIS**  
POLITICAL SKETCH

it off his chest just seemed to get him going. Blair was someone who "refuses to comply with the code of practice on party funding, who calls for party openness but won't publish the secret funds of his own office..."

It all came pouring out. It was as though, having been the butt of personal remarks for more than two years of

Tony Blair's Opposition leadership, and having, night after night, lain in bed repeating and repeating, *sotto voce*, all the things he might have replied but had always thought better of before, he now let fly.

On and on he went: "...Who attacks share options but takes money from millionaires for his own party; and

attacks businessmen; and asks them to fund things for him; who flew Concorde and failed to declare it..."

Was there no end to this? "...Who has a Deputy Leader (John Prescott) who spends a weekend at a five-star hotel and doesn't declare it and who flies to the other side of the world to do newspaper deals and never admits to them..."

Finally, shortage of breath, if not material, brought his tirade to an end. But not before one final

outburst: "If there's any double standards, they sit there, on the Opposition benches!" he yelled. The Prime Minister sat down to perhaps the loudest Tory cheers he has received all this session. Minutes later, he left to renewed cheers, as many government backbenchers stood in the aisles, waving their order papers.

In some ways those final fifteen minutes encapsulated the strengths and weaknesses of all three principal party leaders during this Parliament.

Fighting like a tiger when cornered, Major was well-armed in the detail but easily needed, losing stature and finding it hard to express anger while keeping his cool.

Tony Blair was poised, effective and controlled, but a faint odour of sanctimony hanging over his words (he chose, yesterday, to talk of a "sleaze" on government) left us uncertain whether this was a budding headmaster or an officious head-boy.

And Paddy Ashdown was well-judged, a little righteous and completely ignored.

## Judge will decide if woman can be left to die

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

THE country's most senior family judge will rule today whether a severely brain-damaged former university student should be allowed to die, even though her condition may fall short of a persistent vegetative state.

In what is seen as a new "right-to-die" test case, Sir Stephen Brown, president of the High Court family division, is being asked to widen the category of chronically ill patients where life-sustaining treatment can be withdrawn to let them die in peace and with dignity.

The case was brought before Sir Stephen as an emergency after the feeding tube slipped from the young woman who has been in a coma for 18 months. Since the tube became disconnected on Tuesday, the woman, known as Miss D, aged 29, has only been receiving liquids and medicine through intravenous injections.

The judge has ruled in several past cases — including that of Tony Bland, the Hillsborough disaster victim — that life-sustaining treatment can be withdrawn because the patients were in a persistent vegetative state, known as PVS.

But in the present case, there is a dispute over whether the woman is in full PVS, as defined by the Royal College of Physicians, or "near PVS". Her eyes appear to track moving objects and she blinks if a gesture is made.

William Jennet, Professor of Neurology at Glasgow University and one of the experts consulted in Miss D's case, said yesterday that the hospital, with the backing of the woman's parents, had wanted to seek permission to stop treatment anyway, but the tube disconnection gave more weight to its case.

"Reinsertion would require a minor surgical intervention. Not to insert it would be non-interventionist, which some people would find easier than active withdrawal of treatment," he said. Professor David Chadwick, called by the

NHS Trust, said Miss D could linger for many years. "However I see no prospect of any improvement in her neurological state."

Professor Chadwick said: "In this instance I would strongly support the wishes of a wholly remarkable family who have made astounding efforts to support Miss D and give her every form of stimulation and support towards any recovery that might have been possible."

James Munby, QC, counsel for the Official Solicitor appointed to represent Miss D, who is formally opposing withdrawal of treatment, argued that the movements made by Miss D showed she was not in PVS.

But Professor Chadwick said it was simply a "primitive reflex" which "existed within the nervous system at a lower level than consciousness".

The woman's mother told the court that she agreed with the trust that artificial hydration and nutrition her daughter has been given should be discontinued.

Huw Lloyd, counsel for the trust, which, like all the parties in the case cannot be identified, told the judge the woman suffered from hydrocephalus when she was young, but went on to do well at school and go to university.

She hoped to become a teacher. Then she was involved in a car accident which left her paralysed and with severe mental problems. She needed 24-hour care, but was looked after at home by her parents. In 1995 she suffered a seizure and was taken to hospital where she was treated for hydrocephalus again.

"She finally opened her eyes but has not since regained any meaningful responsiveness," said Mr Lloyd. She had remained in hospital since. "It is the view of those who have examined her that she exhibits no cognitive evidence at all, that she is not aware and that no further change is likely."

There is no medical intention to continue or reinstate medical treatment."



Beasty time: boys preparing to audition at the Dominion Theatre in London yesterday for Disney's £10 million production of *Beauty and the Beast*. They hope to play Chip, a child who is turned into a teacup

## Parliament clears a flood of laws

By James Landale, Political Reporter

THE Government rushed a flood of Bills through the Commons and the Lords last night, in time for this morning's prorogation of Parliament. Ministers and whips stuck to a tight timetable to get as much as possible on the Statute Book.

MPs and peers leave Westminster today at the end of the year's session, but the five-year parliament will not formally come to a close until dissolution on April 8. After a fevered week of horse-trading by government and Labour business managers, most of the legislation was agreed and simply needed to be nodded through.

In the Lords, peers approved Commons amendments to the National Health Service (Primary Care) Bill, which now awaits Royal Assent. The measure introduces automatic life sentences for offenders who commit three violent or sexual crimes and increases sentencing powers of the Scottish courts.

Peers also passed the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Bill, which allows councils and government de-

partments to combat benefit fraud by cross-checking their computer records.

The Building Societies (Distributions) Bill passed its final stage in the Lords and should receive Royal Assent today. The measure is designed to ensure disabled and elderly investors receive their share of the windfalls arising from the conversion of building societies to banks.

In the Commons, MPs approved Lords amendments to the Public Entertainments Licences (Drug Misuse) Bill. Following a Home Office concession, the amendments water down the proposals to allow councils to close down night clubs where there is a serious drugs problem.

MPs also agreed Lords' amendments to the Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill which will now go for Royal Assent. The measure introduces automatic life sentences for offenders who commit three violent or sexual crimes and increases sentencing powers of the Scottish courts.

## Cloning may have benefits, say MPs

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

THE cloning of human beings should be banned, but the door left open for possible uses of the technique in medicine, the Science and Technology Committee of the House of Commons has recommended.

In a report published yesterday, the committee warned that exaggerated reactions to Dolly — the cloned sheep produced at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh — could obscure the potential benefits of the technique.

"This is a very significant, original piece of science that reflects great credit on British science," Sir Giles Shaw, chairman of the committee, said. "The media furore saying that human cloning was just around the corner helped to diminish this work."

The committee concludes that the regulations governing cloning research in Britain are appropriate, but that doubts remain over whether the use of the form of cloning developed at Roslin is forbidden in humans. This is because the 1990 Human Fertilisation and

Embryology Act specifically refers to cloning using embryos, while the Roslin technique uses adult cells.

The HFEA and the Health Department are seeking legal advice over whether the act does cover the new technique, but the committee says that to make sure, the act should be amended.

"While counsel's opinion will clarify the position, it will obviously not be a binding interpretation of the law," the report concludes. "It is not satisfactory for issues as momentous as this to be left until they are decided through test cases. We recommend that the act should be amended to ensure that the Roslin technique comes within its scope."

While it opposes human cloning, the committee says that the technique could produce cells or organs for medical purposes.

"It might be acceptable to produce human cells at the petri dish level," said Dr Lynne Jones, a member of the committee.

## MoD attacked over Gulf War syndrome

The Ministry of Defence was severely criticised by MPs yesterday over its handling of Gulf War illnesses affecting more than 1,000 people. The Commons Defence Committee said that the ministry's approach had been influenced by a "culture of denial", and it was a matter of deep regret that so many veterans had been left to seek compensation through the courts. Those exposed to toxic organophosphate pesticides should receive ex-gratia payments.

The MPs highlighted the failure of MoD officials to warn ministers about the pesticides, but also expressed surprise that the ministers Nicholas Soames and Earl Howe had not been more inquisitive about their use.

## Luxury life 'on expenses'

A chief officer who collected council rents in one of the poorest inner city areas in Britain used public funds to subsidise an expensive lifestyle, according to a report by auditors at Labour-controlled Islington Council, London. It showed that the chief rent officer paid a builder £96,000 to fit out a luxurious new office and spent a further £35,000 on furniture for it. Her expenses included a fridge freezer, television and video recorder, sofa and holiday facilities.

## Bletchley Park plea

Baroness Trumpington, a Government Whip in the House of Lords who served at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, was urged by peers to help to save the secret codebreakers' headquarters near Milton Keynes as a museum. Asked by Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, patron of the Bletchley Park Trust, whether the Government believed that the park should become a national monument, she said that she hoped it would be preserved.

## Spice for Channel 5

Channel 5 has recruited the Spice Girls to head its launch on March 30. The five-girl pop group will be the first to appear on the opening night in a promotional video featuring a remake of Manfred Mann's 1960s hit 5-4-3-2-1. Also rumoured to be making a comeback on the new channel is Roland Rat, who was brought in to boost viewing figures on TV-am. The puppet could join the weekend children's programme *The Mag*.

## Singer's ex-lover jailed

The former lover of the pop star Gabrielle was jailed for life at Nottingham Crown Court for murdering his stepfather and chopping off his head with a Samurai sword. Anthony Antoniou, 31, of Sheffield, and Timothy Redhead, 29, of Woodhouse, Sheffield, had both denied murdering Walter McCarthy, 59. Redhead was jailed for three years after admitting assisting Antoniou in the disposal of Mr McCarthy's head.

## Britons keep growing

The height of the average Briton could rise by five inches (13cm) over the next few generations, according to an American professor. Better nourished mothers and a fall in smoking during pregnancy will produce healthier babies, Professor Robert Fogel, from Chicago University, told a meeting in London. Humans had a long way to go before reaching their optimum height, size or life expectancy, he said.

## Minister's son banned

Alexander Bonsor, right, 20, son of Sir Nicholas Bonsor, the Tory minister, was banned from driving for 14 months and ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £640 for a drink-driving "escape". Bristol magistrates were told that officers saw sparks flying from underneath the student's Ford Sierra and found Bonsor driving with eight fellow Bristol University students, including two in the boot.



## Race to the death

The country's oldest and oddest horse race had an unhappy ending yesterday when the winning horse collapsed and died after crashing into a parked car. Sunny, a nine-year-old mare, failed to pull up after passing the winning post in the 471st running of the 4½-mile Kiplingcotes Derby in east Yorkshire. It then collapsed of an apparent heart attack. Its jockey, Sheila Ashby, was unhurt.

## The hoax skeleton in Arthur Conan Doyle's cupboard

By Daniel McGrory

THE finger of suspicion was pointed at Sir Arthur Conan Doyle yesterday as science's greatest hoaxer, the man who fooled the world with the discovery of Pitdown Man.

Rival academics using detective skills worthy of Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle's master detective, were presenting their conflicting evidence in London.

The discovery of "the earliest Englishman" in a gravel pit in Sussex in 1912 supposedly proved the missing link between man and ape and was to fool science's finest minds

for over 40 years. Long since satisfied that Pitdown Man was a crude forgery, scientists now cover their embarrassment by an annual battle to unmask the hoaxer.

Richard Milner, a scientific historian from the American Museum of Natural History, believes Conan Doyle even left us clues as to his guilt in his adventure books. He is convinced the author planted the skull as his revenge on the scientific establishment by offering them proof of what they wanted to believe about mankind's ancestry.

Copland Doyle lived near the excavation site and was a familiar

figure at the Pitdown golf course. He was said to have littered his dinosaur adventure book *Lost World* in 1912 with clues about his hoax.

The scientific saga had begun the previous summer when Charles Dawson, a country solicitor and amateur archaeologist, was handed an unusually thick skullbone found by a farm labourer. Excited by the discovery, Dawson began digging in the gravelpit and a year later found the now infamous apelike jawbone — the supposed missing link.

Professor Brian Gardiner, president of the Linnean Society of London, said yesterday: "I remain

convinced Pitdown Man was a glorious joke that simply got out of hand."

However, Pitdown Man remained scientific fact until 1953, when Professor Gardiner was a young student working in the Natural History Museum. Senior academics there decided to take a more critical look. They promptly pronounced it a forgery with a cleverly fused mixture of a human skull and an orangutan jaw, which had been stained to give it the appearance of age.

Since then scientists have wavered over the identity of the hoaxer and had at the last count a list of 27

suspects. The Linnean society has taken the lead in this scientific whodunnit.

At yesterday's debate, staged as part of National Science Week, Richard Milner explained how the battle between spiritualists like Conan Doyle and the materialist scientists was the motive for the hoax.

"Conan Doyle was embittered by the prosecution and trial of Henry Slade, an American and one of his favourite sidekicks, and was frankly fed up at being ridiculed by scientists. Pitdown Man was Conan Doyle's chance to teach the scientists a thing or two about evidence."

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## Tagged thief

A THIEF who had been "tagged" with a radio-frequency identification tag on his back, was caught after he called to his family. The tag, which was attached to his back, was used to track his movements. The thief was caught after he called to his family. The tag, which was attached to his back, was used to track his movements. The thief was caught after he called to his family. The tag, which was attached to his back, was used to track his movements.



## Law lord's son waged vendetta Vandal barrister scratched cars in revenge attacks

BY JOANNA BALE AND FRANCES GIBB

THE barrister son of a former law lord faces professional disgrace after he repeatedly vandalised two cars belonging to neighbours after a parking dispute.

Police arrested Hugh Donovan, 63, after setting up a 24-hour surveillance camera which recorded him creeping out of his house at night to scratch a Porsche 911 and a Range Rover belonging to Mark and Tracy Gilling. The cars were parked in an affluent tree-lined street in Fulham, southwest London, where residents say parking is at a premium because the houses do not have drives.

During interviews with detectives, Donovan admitted damaging the cars with keys on eight separate occasions and may be disbarred at a Bar Council disciplinary hearing. West London Magistrates' Court was told on Wednesday that Mr and Mrs Gilling complained to police that their cars had been repeatedly vandalised outside their £450,000 terraced Victorian home since an argument with Donovan in the street on December 23, 1995.

Adrian Foster, for the prosecution, said Donovan admitted damaging the cars for revenge after an altercation where he "called into question their parking and driving ability". Donovan, who was called to the Bar in 1959 but stopped practising as a barrister six years ago, pleaded guilty to two counts of criminal damage. Dressed in a pin-striped suit, he told the court that he was representing himself and handed over a letter of mitigation to the magistrate Dudley Thomas, which was not read out. When asked to explain his financial circumstances, he handed over a letter from his accountant.

Mr Thomas said: "Taking into account the matters you have put before me, I will take a preventative course of action to make sure you do not do

this activity again." Donovan was given a two-year conditional discharge with £30 court costs. He was also ordered to pay £7,441 compensation to the Gillings which he said he could pay within three months.

The barrister, who lives seven doors down from the Gillings with his wife Margaret, a schoolteacher, has two adult children. A Bar Council spokesman said: "There is a possibility he could be disbarred as a result of that hearing."

Residents in the a narrow road lined with Victorian terraced houses, said that parking was often a problem because there was only room

**People do get very wound up about not being able to park near their houses**

for one car per household. James Stafford said: "Many people here own two, even three cars per household, so it is a terrible problem in the evenings when everyone comes home from work."

"People do get very wound up about not being able to park near their houses. My car has been accidentally scratched a couple of times by people trying to squeeze into tiny spaces. However, that does not justify vandalism. It is a common problem of living in the middle of a big city."

Another neighbour, who declined to be named, added: "Mr Donovan is a very volatile man and I have had run-ins with him myself. He has even banged on the door to complain about my television being too loud." Another ad-

ded: "He is a lovely man. We have known him for the last 18 years. They are a fine upstanding Catholic family. It is extremely sad for him. I am sure he will be devastated."

Mr and Mrs Gilling were abroad on a skiing holiday and unavailable for comment, but one neighbour said: "They are a nice young couple with a small baby. This has been a nightmare for them and they are just glad it is all over."

Donovan's father, Lord Donovan, was a Law Lord as well as being chairman of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations.

Apart from his judicial career (High Court from 1950-60, Court of Appeal from 1960 to 1963 and a Law Lord from 1963) the late Lord Donovan was active in Labour politics.

In 1950 he was elected for North East Leicester and while the Labour Party was still in power was offered a judgeship. But it was his chairmanship of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations which made his name.

The Donovan report, as it was known, was the first into the problems of industrial relations for more than 60 years and was set up because of the rise in the number of strikes. But the report rejected strong legislative regulation of industrial relations. He died, aged 73, in 1971.

Ironically, in Donovan's time at the Bar, at which he became known for his work in planning disputes, the barrister found himself in one of his last cases acting on behalf of a group of residents complaining about neighbourhood traffic and noise.

In April 1990, he acted in a feud between Terence Donovan, the photographer, and Jayne Mynors, the headmistress of the exclusive Kensington kindergarten where Princes William and Harry started school.

## Teenage mother wins court backing for truancy

BY DAVID CHARTER  
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

MAGISTRATES yesterday gave their backing to a schoolgirl mother who has skipped lessons for the past 18 months to look after her son. Kelly Turner was 13 when she fell pregnant and last attended lessons two months before the boy, Jake, was born.

Kelly's mother, 33-year-old Mandy Turner, was cleared of failing to send her back to Middlefield School in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, after the birth. The Turner family successfully claimed they were offered no adequate long-term care for Jake, leaving Kelly with no alternative but to stay at home to look after him.

Lincolnshire County Council, which brought the prosecution, claimed the family were determined all along to oppose all its help and said it feared the case created a significant precedent. It raised the spectre of education authorities losing the power to order the hundreds of schoolgirls who fall pregnant every year back into the classroom.

Kelly, who lives with her mother, said: "I told the council I would go back to school, but only if they would help me provide proper care for Jake."

Mrs Turner, who faced a possible fine of up to £1,000 or a jail sentence if convicted, said that the family were relieved the case was over. Mrs Turner said: "Kelly always stated that she wanted to go back to school if they could provide her with a permanent minder. But she was left with no alternative but to stay off because they would only provide help for two months."

"Her son comes first, and she was not going to have him passed between people like a parcel. What sort of mother would I have been if I had stopped her?"

Andrew Jay, the family's solicitor, said: "The council refused to offer long-term assistance in looking after Jake, and then to add insult to



Kelly Turner and her son, Jake: she has not attended class since her pregnancy

injury, they actually prosecuted Kelly's mother."

Lincolnshire social services offered to provide two months of childcare for the baby and the school was willing to rearrange Kelly's lessons to fit in with her own babysitting plans. Jeff Deakin, the county's education director, said he thought

the decision by the town's magistrates "went against the law of the land".

However the council does not plan to appeal because Kelly turns 16 in a few weeks and will be legally allowed to leave school.

Mr Deakin said: "This case could be of significance up and down the land. Magis-

trates, in considering the balance between Kelly in her role as a parent and Kelly in her role as a pupil, has concluded it is the former that must take precedence."

The Department for Education last night said that it was unable to comment until it had received details of the case.

## Man of 75 denies attack on woman aged 84

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A WAR veteran aged 75 punched a woman of 84 in the face when she tried to break up a dispute he was having with her son, a court was told yesterday. Margaret Cameron plunged into a flower bed, suffering cuts to her face and knee, and bruises to her chest, it was claimed.

Her alleged assailant, Philip Butler, was arrested by police and told them he was also assaulted, with a rubber dustbin lid. Mr Butler, of Basingstoke, Hampshire, denies assaulting Mrs Cameron, causing her actual bodily harm.

Andrew Barnett, for the prosecution at Winchester Crown Court, said the incident happened on a pathway behind Mr Butler's home when council workmen began cutting down trees. There was a dispute between Mr Butler and Mrs Cameron's son Alan, a neighbour, who is in his fifties.

Mrs Cameron saw Mr Butler pushing her son and went out and told them to stop. Mr Barnett said: "Mr Butler punched her in the face sufficiently hard to push her back, causing her to fall."

Part of a garden cane became embedded in Mrs Cameron's face and she had to have an operation to remove the splinters. After his arrest Mr Butler told police he had been pushed and fell on Mrs Cameron by accident.

"He claimed he had been hit with a rubber dustbin lid by her son," Mr Barnett said. Mrs Cameron, now in a wheelchair, told the court that her son had gone out to talk to the council workmen to try to stop them cutting down the trees. She said she saw Butler get hold of her son by the shirt and shake him, saying: "I'll kill you."

Mr Cameron told the jury he had been upset to see the trees being cut down. When he spoke to the council foreman he was told that Mr Butler had complained about falling branches. "Mr Butler then suddenly appeared from behind his hedge and attacked without provocation. The trial continues."

## 'Blessing traumatised boy of 12'

BY RUTH GLEDHILL

A BOY aged 12 was so traumatised by a church youth weekend that he was unable to eat for 24 hours and could speak only in monosyllables, according to a report today in *The Church Times*.

Eleanor Theyer said her son Adam suffered a "charismatic" "indocination" when he lost consciousness after two worship leaders laid hands on his head and body during a weekend organised by her local church. Although the church was not Anglican, the phenomenon involved, known as the Toronto Blessing, is spreading throughout the evangelical wing of the established Church. When the blessing is invoked worshippers jump up and down, faint, laugh or bark like dogs.

Writing under an assumed name to protect her son's identity, Mrs Theyer compared the events of the church weekend to the mind-control techniques of cults. "I had never heard of the Toronto Blessing," she said. "My feeling on learning of what had happened was one of outrage. I felt that my child had been abused."

Mrs Theyer complained to her minister, who contacted the youth leaders concerned. They promised that the Toronto Blessing would no longer be invoked during youth activities.

## Elegant widow, 74, was the victim of ritualistic killing

BY LIN JENKINS

AN ELEGANT wealthy widow who was half stripped, bound hand and foot and stabbed to death was the victim of a ritualistic killing, police said yesterday.

Alice Rye, 74, died after letting her attacker into her detached home in the village of Spital, Merseyside. There were no signs of a struggle but she was taken into the spare bedroom, her hands tied behind her back, a bandage put round her neck, and stabbed in the chest.

Police said elements to her injuries suggested that the killing in December was ritualistic with a sexual motive, but would not say if they believed there were religious or satanic overtones.

Detectives said that Mrs Rye had meetings in a pub during the two years before she died with a man in his 60s who was unknown to her family and friends. They issued an artist's impression of the "well-dressed" man. The couple used to meet in the lounge of a pub on the edge of a council estate close to the M53, about ten miles from her home.

Mrs Rye, the widow of a company director, used to accompany her husband on business trips to China, Africa and Japan. She was described

as was strikingly attractive and immaculately dressed.

Staff and customers of the Twenty Row Inn, Wallasey, recall the elderly couple who differed from the usual clientele as they sat in an alcove having ordered a pint of bitter and a glass of white wine.

Detective Chief Inspector George Denton said the man appeared refined, smartly dressed and well-spoken, with a round face and white thinning hair. "The visits were in the afternoon, midweek, but there was never any regular pattern," he said. "The pub concerned could have been some midway meeting point for Alice and some former colleague. This is not the typically the type of pub she would frequent."

"Suggestions that these meetings might have been clandestine trysts with a gentleman are pure speculation. It could be that the pub was a convenient halfway point at which she arranged to meet up with a personal friend from her past, or business associate."

"Certainly at their age we would consider any friendship which she pursued was purely platonic. We have got to remain open-minded about it, but if this man can be ruled out of our inquiries it will certainly assist us."

## Penguin to settle over royalties

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE estates of authors including Virginia Woolf and James Joyce are to receive more money after an agreement reached with Penguin Books over the payment of royalties.

The books involved in the deal returned to copyright at the beginning of last year when the European Union opted to extend copyright to 70 years after the author's death. Copyright in Britain had traditionally been 50 years.

Penguin has now reached agreement with the literary agents A. P. Watt and the Society of Authors, representing specific literary estates including those of Woolf, Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan. The terms are likely to prove a model for the industry.

Margaret Bluman, Penguin's contracts director, said yesterday that each deal varied slightly but that Penguin's standard terms were 10 per cent of net receipts, meaning that the proportion paid in royalties would be calculated after discounts allowed to retailers, which in Penguin's case would often be up half of the wholesale price.

David Campbell, managing director of the hardback Everyman Library, said that he had also reached the basis of an agreement which he hoped to see finalised within a few weeks.

## Tagged thief used monitor as free phone

BY RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

A THIEF who had been electronically tagged tapped into the BT line linked to the equipment to make 61 free telephone calls to his family. Stewart Palgrave was a social man who liked making calls to his mother and brother, his solicitor told Norwich magistrates yesterday.

The bill for the calls made by Palgrave, 32, of Heathgate, Norwich, had to be paid by Geografix, the firm carrying out a tagging experiment throughout Norfolk.

Palgrave, a fruit packer, had been fitted with an electronic bracelet around his wrist and a telephone line was installed to his flat, where he was under curfew for offences of theft and attempted theft.

John Pitt, for the prosecution, said the line into the flat was attached to a

monitoring box with a fitted antenna. An electronic signal is sent from the bracelet to the antenna if the curfew is broken, which Palgrave did on several occasions. The information is transmitted down the telephone line to the monitoring station.

Last September it was discovered that Palgrave had been tampering with the equipment. Mr Pitt said: "He had interfered with it so he could make personal telephone calls along the BT line. It seems he had another line and had tapped into the line." He said that the calls were billed to Geografix.

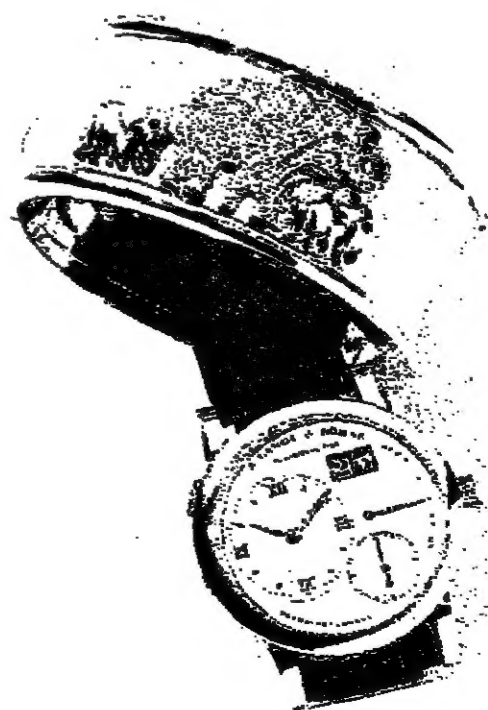
Palgrave had also snapped the antenna off the monitoring box, the court was told. Katharine Moore, his solicitor, told the court that he had been "curious" about the technology. She added: "He is

a social man. He was phoning his mother or brother". Palgrave led a chaotic and disorganised life and was unsuitable for electronic tagging linked to a curfew order, she added. He broke his curfew on 14 separate occasions, once for just six minutes.

Magistrates jailed Palgrave for four months after being told of his "awful performance" while under curfew. He was resentenced for the original offences for which he had been curfewed and a separate theft he admitted.

Andrew Hone, head of monitoring services with Geografix, said outside the court: "There are now a number of safeguards on the lines to prevent this happening. I would not like to say exactly how he did it."

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**By JEREMY LAURANCE**  
**HEALTH CORRESPONDENT**

The charity called for a national strategy to combat alcohol dependence, including measures to curb drinking among the young.

**BY NICHOLAS WATT, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT**

Miss McAuliskey, 25, who is seven months pregnant, is being held at Holloway Prison awaiting extradition to Germany on charges of attempted murder and possession of explosives. The case is linked to an IRA mortar attack on a British Army base in Germany last June. She has been refused bail while she

Sinn Féin issued a terse statement saying that nationalists should agree on a unity candidate if Miss McAlisley's announcement was a "realistic proposition". However, the SDLP insisted that it would contest Mid-Ulster.

Leading members of Sinn Féin were understood to be furious with Mrs McAlisley. Miss McAlisley could eat into Mr McGuinness's vote by attracting support from both moderate and hardline nationalists who sympathise with her plight.

Although Catholics account for 60 per cent of the constituency's population, Unionists



The tight electoral arithmetic means that Miss McAliskey could upset Sinn Féin's strategy of winning up to three seats at the election. Gerry Adams, the party president, is widely tipped to recap-

Mrs McAliskey said that her daughter had decided to contest Mid-Ulster to put pres-

Mrs McAliskey's decision to encourage her daughter to stand appeared to mark her

In a debate on the peace process in West Belfast, just before the first anniversary of the ceasefire in 1995, Mrs McAliskey virtually silenced Mr Adams when she stood up and asked: "Gerry, what is your plan B?"

**By DANIEL McGRORY**

Mr Young refused to comment yesterday. The Football Association said: "Anyone can sue anyone if they feel so inclined. But our rule 13 states: 'A referee shall not be held liable for any kind of injury suffered by player, official or spectator.' If a player thought a game too rough, it was up to him to tell his captain he wanted to go off."

# Alcohol a

# Shakes & No



Wounded fans say tactics by Portuguese police nearly caused another Hillsborough

# Britain demands explanation on United shootings

By JOHN GOODBODY AND ADRIAN LEE

THE Foreign Office yesterday demanded a detailed report from Portuguese police, who opened fire on Manchester United fans with rubber and plastic bullets.

Supporters returning from their team's match against FC Porto in Oporto on Wednesday night complained of police brutality that left 18 fans needing hospital treatment. Uefa, the European football governing body, began an inquiry into the violent events that marred United's 0-0 quarter final clash, which was attended by 10,500 English supporters.

Delfim Passos, the Oporto police chief, said: "We fired plastic and rubber pellets in the air and on the ground to contain the English fans. We did not use excessive force. We have a clear conscience."

He told a press conference: "The police were obliged to act because of the situation created by the United fans." He said that 18 police officers had been injured, one seriously, as United supporters threw chunks of china from smashed stadium lavatories.

In the most combustible incident involving an English club in European football competitions since the 1985

Heysel stadium disaster, fans also alleged chaotic organisation. They said police behaviour might have caused another Hillsborough disaster. Fans were treated for crush injuries, bruising from batons and pellet wounds.

United, which won the two-legged European Cup quarter-final tie 4-0 on aggregate, set up its own investigation while the Foreign Office ordered a full report from Portuguese police. The disciplinary committee of Uefa will discuss its independent observer's investigation on Tuesday.

When shocked United fans arrived back on charter flights at Ringway Airport, Ashley Maddock, 15, from Chester, displayed a foot-long welt across his shoulders. He said: "People were being pushed in a funnel, and they could see there was no escape. You either took your chances of being crushed or faced the police, who did not want anyone to leave the area."

Ken Farrimond, one of United's security managers, said: "It could have been another Hillsborough." He described the shepherding of thousands of visiting fans down a narrow cobbled back-street before the game to just three turnstiles as

"a recipe for trouble". The problems increased inside the stadium before the game began. Mrs Ali Crimes, from Salford, said that United supporters were crammed into tightly packed pens on towering terraces and they had to tear away fences to stop themselves being crushed.

Kevin Jones, 28, from Wrexham, North Wales, was brought off a plane in a wheelchair and taken by ambulance to Wythenshawe Hospital after being hit in the leg by a rubber bullet, fired after the game. About 650 police, including the riot squad, were on duty, supported by 150 security officers from Manchester.

"There was a crowd of us trying to get out of a gate which officials would not open," Mr Jones said. "Suddenly the gates were opened and we saw the police facing us through a gap a couple of feet wide. They opened fire without warning. I was hit and screamed with pain. We had done nothing wrong."

Oporto police, who in the mid-1970s were involved in another shooting incident when four Benfica followers died, at first denied that they had used plastic pellets to control the United fans.



A Manchester United supporter with a plastic pellet fired by police; they can break the skin and cause shallow wounds



A fan shows his injury

## 'An indiscriminate weapon'

By ADRIAN LEE

THE plastic pellets fired at Manchester United fans are favoured by several European police forces. About a quarter of an inch in diameter, they are much smaller than the plastic baton rounds, commonly described as bullets, used in Northern Ireland. They are contained in cartridges which scatter about 15 pellets when fired.

The Banell anti-riot pellets are designed to be shot into

the ground to bounce up or at legs. They can break the flesh and leave shallow wounds. Supporters in Oporto showed injuries to their lower bodies and arms. One man was hit in the head.

One expert said yesterday that he was amazed that the pellets, which travel at 1,000ft per second, had been fired at football fans. "They are totally indiscriminate and fired from close range can do a lot of damage. They are supposed to bounce up into limbs but

they can easily hit the face or the eye." The practice of firing into the ground and bouncing the pellets into targets is known as "skip firing".

In Northern Ireland, 16 people have been killed and more than 500 injured by plastic bullets, which were first used in 1973. They have never been used on the mainland. In skilled hands, baton rounds are regarded as more accurate than pellets and it is possible to pick out individual trouble makers.

## Alcohol and police inexperience made trouble predictable

THE portents of Oporto went unheeded, with very nearly tragic consequences. On Tuesday at Manchester Airport, even at 8am, the departure lounge heaved with loud and boisterous Manchester United fans, and you would not have put a lighted match to the mouths of many. Once United's charter plane had reached Oporto, they were there again by the score, cavorting on the carousel as United's players waited for their luggage.

Where was the security? Adrian Thorne, the Football Association safety officer, was in attendance as an observer, and a worried man he looked. He must have heard the

uncannily accurate prediction from Marilia Astle, one of the British Embassy staff from Lisbon sent to monitor the event and to attempt to diffuse the situation in advance: she said there would be 10,000 Manchester fans for whom only 6,400 tickets had been allocated.

On to the stadium, to the main event in which United were to be praised for ensuring that FC Porto fired only blanks. Immediately outside the Estadio Das Antas, one saw the first riot squad excess. A group of youths was baying at the militia, one officer of the law lost his discipline and cracked his baton heavily on to a shaven head. Before kick off the score was 20 injured,



*The Portuguese police may have been unprepared, but that is no excuse for the drunken misbehaviour of so many English football fans, says Rob Hughes, chief sports writer*

three taken to hospital and at least one with baton wounds.

The problem outside the ground was scarcely known to us, even though security staff were in radio communication throughout. But at the end of the game, a red flare was lit on the United terrace. Immediately afterwards a rocket was fired.

If the fans were all innocent, why had one brought such a weapon, similar to the rocket which killed a spectator at Cardiff Arms Park a few seasons ago?

Within seconds of that, we heard the first volleys of gunfire. There were two specific rounds, and though some officials tried to shrug

it off as fireworks, the overworked medical staffs were deployed taking out five wounded United fans. Even then the police were insisting: "Not a single shot was fired."

Even then some of the walking wounded were showing to the press the pellets, small and perfectly round like peas, and the announcements, in English, were repeatedly calling for calm, instructing the United followers to remain in their steel cages until the police could ensure their safe removal.

But it was the police themselves whom the fans now feared and those Mancunians taken away in wheelchairs were too frightened to give their names. After the evacua-

tion, Graham Kelly, the FA Chief Executive, perpetuated the illusion of English innocents being fired upon irrationally by foreign police forces. Mr Kelly had not been on the trip, but he took the judgment that the English are victims. They are, many of them, but when will this country stop exporting so-called supporters, fuelled by drink and without legitimate tickets, and then blame foreign police forces for not coping in the same manner as our own?

They have, abroad, no real experience, no grounds fully monitored by closed circuit cameras, and not the ease of language or the past history of isolating troublemakers.

## Bishops angry at secret deal on TV ads

By RUTH GLEDHILL  
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

A LEADING Church of England bishop last night distanced the Church hierarchy from a television advertising campaign organised by two dioceses over Easter.

The commercial, which features people praying while they drive a car, wait for a bus or visit the hairdresser, has caused a furious debate among Church leaders, who are angry that they were not consulted. Details of the advertisement were leaked to Campaign magazine yesterday.

The Bishops of Birmingham and Lichfield, in whose dioceses the advertisements will appear, knew of the scheme, as did the Archbishop of Canterbury, but the Archbishop of York and most of the Church's 44 diocesan bishops did not. The Right Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield and head of the Church's communications committee, said: "This advertisement alarms me. This is not the Church of England. I was absolutely flabbergasted when I learnt about it. I could not believe it, after all we have been through with previous advertising campaigns."

As head of the communications committee, he would have expected to be one of the first to know. "Until yesterday, I knew absolutely nothing about this advertising initiative," he said. "I recognise that it is an attempt by individuals to make creative use of television in order to encourage people to go to Church. But I am convinced that, as far as the Church of England is concerned, we simply cannot go on creating this kind of publicity without reference to other people in the Church."

Bishop McCulloch will be calling a meeting of all those involved in church advertising to formulate a coherent policy for the future. He said: "The impression is being given that what these two dioceses are doing has the full backing of the Church of England. But the communications committee of the General Synod had at no stage been informed about this initiative."

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# Deaths from new CJD strain 'may run to thousands'

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

TENS of thousands of people may die from the new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the brain condition linked to BSE, scientists said yesterday.

A year to the day since the Government admitted the likelihood of the link, the scientists told the first national conference of relatives of CJD victims that it was still impossible to predict how many people were likely to die. "We still have to say that there is a range from the odd 100 or so cases right through to tens of thousands," John Pattison, Professor of Medical Microbiology at University College London, said.

Dr Pattison, who heads the Government's advisory committee on CJD and BSE, said at Warwick University that the number of cases of the new strain of CJD arising in the next two or three years would be crucial.

On March 20 last year, Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, disclosed that ten cases of a variant of CJD with a distinctive brain pathology, had probably been caused by eating beef contaminated with BSE. Since then six more cases have been diagnosed.

Peter Smith, Professor of Tropical Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said: "It would be premature to assume that there would be no

big epidemic of the new strain of CJD simply because no more than 16 cases had been confirmed so far."

The key uncertainty, Professor Smith said, was the length of the incubation period. If this varied widely between individuals, there could be a surge in the number of people developing the disease. "If the number of cases in each of the next three years is roughly constant, and less than about 20 a year, a final size of the epidemic may well be a few hundred cases or less."

"If there are 25 or more cases confirmed this year, with a doubling or tripling in each of the following two years, that would be compatible with... an epidemic of many thousands of cases."

Exposure of the public to contaminated meat is thought to have occurred in the mid-1980s before safeguards were introduced, suggesting an incubation period of about ten years in those who have died from the new strain. It differs from the classical form of the disease in attacking people under 40.

The scientists said if a typical incubation period turned out to be no more than ten to 15 years, the total cases of the new disease would be relatively low. But it was possible that those who had died had a genetic susceptibility

which caused the disease to develop more quickly.

Dr Pattison said: "It may be that the cases we have seen so far are a small group of people with a short incubation period, for reasons we do not understand, and that the peak of the disease will be seen in later years."

John Collinge, a specialist in molecular genetics at St Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, told the conference that the evidence for a link between BSE and new-variant CJD was "persuasive" and should be accepted as "a working hypothesis". No cure for CJD was in sight, Professor Collinge said. But some forms of treatment were worth exploring. The most hopeful was the use of drugs to influence the behaviour of the mutant prion protein thought to cause the disease. The disease appeared to be caused when this rogue protein attacked its healthy neighbours.

The conference was organised by the CJD Support Network, set up two years ago to help families of victims of the Alzheimer's Disease Society. Dot Churchill, whose son Stephen, 19, was the first victim of the new variant and who died in May 1995, said: "All the families want to see a full independent inquiry into the Government's handling of BSE."



How statues to Darwin, left, Brunel and Baird might look along The Mall. The site has not been decided

## Scientists pick all-time Top 50

By ALAN HAMILTON

### Monumental debate to choose the statues to British genius

ACADEMICS were considering a monumental challenge yesterday: who should inhabit an avenue of statues honouring British inventive genius?

Iain Sproat, National Heritage Minister, wants to recognise Britain's long history of science and engineering achievement to mark the millennium. The trouble is, there are so many candidates.

A National Lottery Millennium grant and half by private industry, said: "We have a proliferation of statues to actors, writers, soldiers, kings and queens, but the engineers, scientists and discoverers whose contribution has been equally great are seriously under-represented."

His own favoured candidates include the agrarian reformer Turnip Townshend, Sir Isaac Newton, James Watt and George Stephenson of the steam engine. Sir Frank Whittle of the jet engine, Sir Alexander Fleming of penicillin, Sir Christopher Cockerell of the hovercraft, the mathematician Alan Turing,

Isambard Kingdom Brunel, John Logie Baird of television, and Barnes Wallis, of the bouncing bomb.

A straw poll of scientists by *The Times* yesterday indicated strong support for the inclusion of Charles Darwin, and of the Victorian mathematician James Clerk Maxwell, whose contribution to physics is regarded as being on a par with Newton and Einstein.

Archie Howie, professor of physics at Cambridge University, made an appeal for Lord Rutherford, splitter of the atom, J.J. Thomson, discover-

er of electrons, and Michael Faraday, the pioneer of electricity.

Sir Arnold Wolfendale, professor of experimental physics at the Royal Institution and a former Astronomer Royal, nominated the astronomer Sir John Herschel, discoverer of the planet Uranus, and Sir Charles Parsons, the Newcastle engineer who invented the steam turbine.

Dr Miriam Rothschild, the eminent biologist, loyally nominated her father, Charles, who died in 1923: "He invented the whole concept of nature conservation." Several scientists said that erecting statues to the dead was a waste of effort. They said the money would be put to better use providing scholarships to train the next generation of British genius.

## Gene tests show killer flu came from pigs

By NIGEL HAWKES  
SCIENCE EDITOR

SCIENTISTS have confirmed that the flu virus which swept around the world in 1918, killing 20 million people, originated in pigs.

Samples taken from the lungs of a young soldier who died in the epidemic provided enough genetic material to prove the hypothesis, says a report in *Science*. The investigation, by a team at the US Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, was made more difficult by the way flu stores its gene information in the form of RNA (ribonucleic acid), not the more stable DNA.

Most flu viruses are believed to originate in birds, usually ducks. They are passed to pigs, which is why so many originate in China, where ducks and pigs are raised in close proximity.

The new investigation shows that the 1918 virus, a particularly virulent one, was completely novel. Hardest hit by it were young adults, usually the most resistant to flu infection. The American team is to continue examination of the RNA samples to try to find the cause. John Oxford, of the London Hospital Medical College, has begun a similar examination. A Canadian team plans to dig up seven men believed to have died of the 1918 flu, who are buried in frozen ground in Norway. They hope the bodies will be so well preserved that better samples can be obtained.

## Officers for to racism

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## Diver wins £266,000 for accident

A diver was awarded £266,000 damages at the High Court yesterday for an accident which ended his career as an offshore worker in the North Sea. Philip Zammit, 39, was left dangling helplessly in 85 metres of water for 40 minutes after developing cramp during a six-hour dive. He suffered a psychiatric injury and developed a fear of water.

Mr Justice Garland agreed that Stena Offshore allowed Mr Zammit, of Southampton, to become so tired that he could not help himself. Mr Zammit said afterwards that he owed his life to Stephen Mudge, another diver.

### Crane boy hurt

A 14-year-old boy suffered leg injuries when he was run over by a mobile crane after he and five other teenagers broke into a Gloucester building site and drove the machine around. He suffered severe cuts and was taken to Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, where he was in satisfactory condition.

### Rustlers strike

Rustlers have taken 40 continental cross-breed steers from the Government's agricultural research centre at Hillsborough, Co Down. They were put on a trailer during the night. A spokesman for the centre said the cattle were healthy and were being tested on a range of diets.

### Lucknow sale

Two medals awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel George Biddulph, whose death at the second relief of Lucknow in 1857 was avenged within an hour by the killing of 1,500 Indians, fetched £1,325 at a Phillips auction in London.

### Spiked food

Tinned food for hedgehogs, designed to supplement their diet of worms, slugs and beetles through the summer, is being sold at Safeway stores. The cans of Spikes Dinner contain crushed chicken carcass and include advice on feeding the animals.

### CORRECTION

The European Communities (Amendment) Bill was sponsored by Lord Pearson of Rannoch and not, as reported on March 19, by Lord Taverne, who led the opposition to the Bill.

## No sweat, a little poison can be good



**TOKINS** in botulism may soon be used to dry the hands, feet and armpits of the perpetually anxious and sweaty.

Botulism poisoning may develop from four hours to eight days after taking food contaminated with the organism. Practically any sort of food is liable to contamination, but badly tinned vegetables, meat and fish are often the culprits. Victims develop double vision, drooping eyelids and a dry mouth, soon followed by difficulty in speaking and swallowing and eventually by a paralysis that includes muscles involved in breathing.

Over the past few years, preparations of botulinum toxin have been used for injection so as to deliberately paralyse muscles, such as around the neck and eyes, that have gone into spasm suffered by involuntary movements. It is also used in cosmetic medicine to treat those whose brows are unnecessarily furrowed.

When used to control sweat-

ing, injections are given into the skin 2.5cms apart. *The Lancet* recently reported the case of a young woman whose dripping hands prevented her from working. Within 24 hours of the injection, the skin around the site had stopped sweating. Within a week, the whole palm was dry. She suffered no recurrence in the next 3½ months, but it is not known how long the effect will last. Another medical journal, *Medical Monitor*, has reviewed similar treatment of excessively sweaty armpits.

Patients with palm injections may develop a minimal muscle weakness in the hands. Doctors are warned that injections must not be given at the same time as certain antibiotics, and that anaphylactic reactions - extreme allergies producing collapse - have been recorded.

DR THOMAS STUTTAFFORD

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## Officers under fire for tolerating racism in Services

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE Royal Navy has been accused of tolerating racism and not being entitled to call itself an equal opportunities employer. Efforts to recruit more personnel from the ethnic minorities were derided as "political correctness".

In a survey of the Armed Services and civil servants working for the Ministry of Defence, white sailors commonly admitted that they did not think black people were suitable for the Royal Navy. It was claimed that "they" did not like water, could not fight, and lacked educational qualifications. In the Army, black people were said to be "lazy" while Asians were considered "sly".

Some white naval officers made remarks such as: "Where would you pray to Mecca on a submarine?"

The survey, commissioned by the MoD from the Office for Public Management, a private consultancy, found evidence of racism in all three services. Helen Brown, one of the authors of the report, said that the MoD was "among the worst ministries" for attitudes on race relations, although she acknowledged that, since the report had been completed last September, the ministry had taken steps to enforce equal opportunity policies.

However, Dr Brown said that the MoD had "a long way to go to catch up with the 1990s". One of the problems, the report said, was that senior officers in the services did not accept that racism existed, so they did not feel the need to tell those under their

command not to make racist remarks.

"We find it disappointing that there is still relatively little acknowledgement of the pervasive, long-running and deeply entrenched problem of racism within the Armed Services," the report said.

A senior official in the Ministry of Defence said that the report had raised serious issues and admitted that changes could not be introduced "overnight". The three Service chiefs, the Chief of the

**RAF had an unwritten rule of 'no blacks, Pakis, spots or specs' on VIP parades**

Defence Staff and the Permanent Under-Secretary at the ministry were all, he said, committed to ensuring that racist attitudes were "stamped on".

The investigators found that, in the RAF, the unwritten rule for parades or guards of honour assembled to meet VIPs was "no blacks, Pakis, spots or specs".

Army officers interviewed by the survey team admitted that the typical officer was seen as white, male and middle class. The report said: "Racially offensive language, behaviour and attitudes remain

a significant feature of life in the Army." Calling people racist names such as "Snowy" and "Moonlight" was dismissed as "robust humour".

Many white soldiers were "openly resistant, if not hostile, to the prospect of a significantly larger presence of people from black minority communities within the Army". The latest figures showed that only 1.5 per cent of nearly 75,300 army personnel identified themselves as black or Asian. The most senior or recorded black officer held the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

The report's section on the Navy was the most scathing. Although the Navy had an "excellent" statement of equal opportunities in its recruitment literature, it was "not matched by day-to-day understanding or practice". The report said: "We believe on the basis of the evidence available to us through this short study that the Royal Navy is not justified in describing itself as an equal opportunities employer under the terms of the Race Relations Act."

It added: "The conventions of a seafaring tradition result in a level of awareness of cultural diversity which is ten or 20 years behind that of society at large, and which can reasonably be said to constitute institutional racism."

The survey team discovered a "huge complacency" about race questions which was underpinned by "anxiety that the comfortable lifestyle of the white majority could be threatened if race issues were given more prominence".



Bruno Walter and Kathleen Ferrier at the first festival in 1947; many international stars have followed

## Edinburgh Festival revives its greatest hits for 50th birthday

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

THE Edinburgh Festival celebrates its fiftieth birthday this year with a look back at some of the classic performances from its history.

The organisers aim to recreate early hits using a new generation of artists this summer. Brian McMaster, the festival director, announced the programme yesterday and promised that the event would be "a real humdinger". There will be four world premieres among 100 productions running from August 10 to 30.

The festival, claimed to be the world's largest cultural event, has over the years attracted performers including Joan Sutherland, Margot Fonteyn, Marlene Dietrich, Luciano Pavarotti, Peter Cook and Dudley Moore.

Recreated highlights will include Verdi's *Macbeth*, which was the first opera performed at the festival in 1947. Then the Glyndebourne Festival Opera brought the house down. This year the Royal Opera will present the original and rarely performed 1847 version.

T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, which was premiered at the 1949 festival in the poet's presence, with a cast

including Alec Guinness and Irene Worth, will return to the stage with the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company.

Some momentous events, however, will not be reprised, such as an avant-garde "happening" in 1963 where the appearance of a nude on stage so shocked Edinburgh sensibilities that producer and model were prosecuted for indecency. They were defended successfully by the late Nicholas Fairbairn.

Apart from retrospective events, the programme includes a celebration of Gaelic culture, performances by an Aboriginal dance group and

a "monumental" Salzburg Festival production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, directed by Peter Stein.

In the spirit of past festivals, attempts have been made to keep ticket prices low to enable people to see as much as possible. But while most productions start at £5, for the first time the top ticket price has risen to £50.

Mr McMaster, who took the helm at the festival in 1992, said he believed the ideals behind the event in 1947 were still present. Then, Sir John Falconer, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, wrote in the programme foreword

that the festival was "not a commercial undertaking in any way" but rather an endeavour to provide a stimulus to the establishing of a new way of life based on the arts. "Edinburgh hopes that visitors will refresh their souls and reaffirm their belief in things other than material," he wrote.

Last year saw record audiences and box office income of more than £2 million, as well as record sponsorship. As a result the year's projected £125,000 deficit was just £48,000. But Mr McMaster said: "Year on year we have taken huge gambles and so far we have been lucky."

In 1947 the festival budget was £130,000, the equivalent of £2.6 million in today's terms, which paid for 55 productions. The castle was flooded for four days despite the fuel restrictions of the postwar era. In 1997 about £5.8 million will be spent.

Mr McMaster said his first visit to the festival in 1963 had been a seminal event. He wanted others to be similarly affected. "I believe that art can change people's lives. That sounds silly and pretentious, but I think the arts can touch people, make them live better lives and expand their emotional reactions."



The premiere of *The Cocktail Party* in 1949

## Stonehenge tour train backed by English Heritage

By DAVID LOVIBOND AND ROBIN YOUNG

A TOURIST development for Stonehenge has been approved by government archaeology advisers, despite criticism from conservationists.

English Heritage has accepted the idea of a trackless land-train to tour the stones from a visitor centre. The proposal came from the Tussauds Group, which won the bid to build the new centre on the fringes of the World Heritage site.

Sir Jocelyn Stevens, the English Heritage chairman, said: "We would not do anything to destroy archaeology. The point is to save Stonehenge. At the moment, one million people are driving to within 300 yards of the stones. We will be trying to get them there in a way that is environmentally friendly."

An English Heritage report on the proposals acknowledges that some monuments would be damaged by the necessary works and that at least some of the route would be visible from Stonehenge. However, most of the two-mile route would follow existing trackways, and the land-train of linked carriages would not need rails.

The plan was criticised by Kate Fielden, secretary of Avebury Society, whose remit extends to Stonehenge. She said: "The established aim is to return the monument to its landscape and the emphasis is on removing extraneous features. It is simply not on to have a Disneyland railway in a World Heritage site."

The Wiltshire county archaeologist, Roy Canham, said that an original proposal for a short ride from the visitor centre to King Barrow would have allowed visitors "to slow to the pace of the landscape — including VDUs in the trains, as they do, they will offer a plastic experience."

The Tussauds project has been given agreement in principle by the National Trust, which owns most of the land. If the Millennium Commission also approves, English Heritage expects the first trains to run in 2000.

## Major writes to officer's widow

THE Prime Minister has written to the widow of an army major killed in a grenade accident in Oman (Michael Evans writes). She had waited three years for the Ministry of Defence to respond to her pleas for compensation and details of how he died.

The case of Deborah Swift's struggle to find out how her husband, Tony, was killed in 1994 while on loan service to

the Omani Army as a weapons expert was highlighted in *The Times* yesterday.

Mrs Swift, 38, said that she had suddenly received letters from John Major and Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, offering to help. Mr Major told her the MoD had agreed to handle any claim for compensation and that ministry officials would be making contact with her solicitors "as

a matter of urgency". Major Swift was killed at the age of 40 when the rifle-launched grenade he was testing exploded prematurely in June 1994. An Omani inquiry said it must have been a faulty grenade, but the evidence had been destroyed in the explosion.

Mrs Swift, of Fleet, Hampshire, said: "It makes me angry that only now have I had a proper response."

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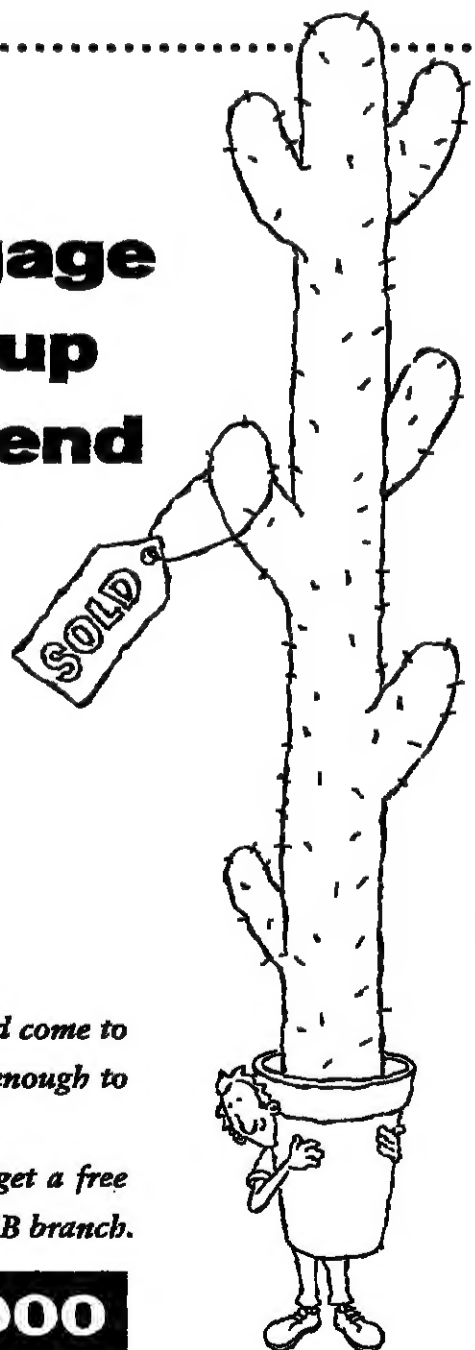
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# ITV regulator is likely to approve Blair-Major clash

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Independent Television Commission has suggested that it would approve a televised debate between John Major and Tony Blair, excluding Paddy Ashdown.

Senior sources from the regulator of independent television said that the latest proposals from ITV, under which the Liberal Democrat leader would be questioned separately, appeared to comply with its code on impartiality. The code requires broadcasters to show balance throughout the general election campaign, but this would not have to apply to every programme.

Yesterday the Liberal Democrats repeated their threat to take legal action if Mr Ashdown was not involved in a three-way debate. Lord Holmes, who is leading the Liberal Democrat negotiating team, accused the Tories of deliberately trying to bounce the other parties into an agreement. He claimed that opinion polls had shown that 75 per cent of the public wanted to see the Liberal Democrats involved.

"The Tory party, in its arrogance, is trying to bounce the agenda. I think it is disgraceful. We shall certainly resist it."

It would be more difficult, however, for a judge to find in favour of the Liberal Demo-

crats if the commission had raised no objection.

Under the latest plan, which appears to be favoured by both the Tories and Labour over a second proposal from the BBC, Mr Ashdown would be interviewed but would not debate with Mr Major and Mr Blair.

All three leaders would make short opening statements and each leader would be asked one question. Then the Prime Minister would debate with Mr Blair for about 25 minutes, with Jonathan Dimbleby in the chair.

Mr Ashdown would then face questioning on his own, before another 30-minute slot when Mr Blair and Mr Major would be cross-questioned by a panel including Sue Lawley and Michael Brunson.

Under the BBC's plan, which the Prime Minister thinks is too rigid, he and Mr Blair would face questions from David Dimbleby. They would be asked six questions each and allowed two replies, each two minutes in length. Mr Ashdown would then be interviewed for 10 minutes, then there would be statements from all three party leaders.

Last night Labour said that it was prepared to negotiate with both channels. The party stipulated only that the format be legal and that there be an

audience. Although Labour has argued that Mr Ashdown should be involved it is not pressing for his inclusion in a debate.

Derry Irvine, Shadow Lord Chancellor, is the head of Labour's negotiating team. Michael Dobbs, a former vice-chairman of the Tory party, is leading John Major's team.

Mr Major is still pressing for two or three head-to-head debates on the Sundays during the general election campaign.

The continuing dispute over the televised debate coincided with a new report claiming that such programmes had little impact on election results. A paper, published by the Hansard Society, says that audience participation should be included in any debate broadcast during the general election.

The document, by Dr Stephen Coleman, an academic student of elections, also argues that no party leader "who can reasonably expect to win enough votes to become prime minister should be excluded from participating."

Dr Coleman's report proposes a debate involving all three main party leaders and separate debates for Scotland and Wales. Under his proposed plan all three leaders would be able to cross question each other.



John Swinney, SNP Treasury spokesman, outlining a "budget for Scotland" yesterday

## SNP promises lower taxes

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

THE Scottish National Party yesterday promised tax cuts for low earners and promised to restore student grants and state benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds when it published its budget for an independent Scotland.

The 30-page document gave details of Scotland's spending over four years of independence, with annual expenditure reaching £2 billion in the fourth year. The low rate tax

would be cut from 20p to 15p, but higher earners would be hit by the abolition of the ceiling on national insurance contributions.

To compensate middle earners, the level of income taxed at basic rate would be expanded by 15 per cent. The SNP would also cut VAT on fuel to 5 per cent and raise tobacco duty by 15 per cent and reduce spirit duties by 10 per cent. Pensions would rise by five per cent.

John Swinney, the party's

Treasury spokesman, said: "It is our aim in this election to switch the focus of economic debate in Scotland away from how we fare as a regional outpost of the UK, and towards what we can achieve as an independent nation."

An Edinburgh-based whisky company announced yesterday that it was dropping the SNP logo from the labels of its "Independence" blend because they were unpopular with hoteliers and public houses.

## Spin doctors silence the big man — for now

JOHN PRESCOTT is a dream for television, loud, old Labour and larger than life: quite the opposite of the sanitised new Labour front-benchers with their smooth ways and rehearsed words signifying nothing.

Yesterday, during Prime Minister's Questions, the old bruiser could clearly be seen back at his leader's side, prodding and pounding his disdain for John Major. But otherwise this week he has been strangely absent from our screens.

Where has he been? And what can explain his unlikely silence?

The Tories plainly think he is a suitable target for derision. On Tuesday, in perhaps his last chance to creep to a Tory premier for some while, John Sykes, Tory MP for Scarborough, threw a soft ball to the PM, describing the Labour Cabinet-in-waiting as "a group of failed teachers, a bunch of ex-trade union officials, one television director and a bar steward".

John Major has always professed his distaste for snobbery as perhaps being a man whose childhood was spent among garden gnomes, then in rented rooms in Brixton, but he grinned smugly at the sneer. "Who is meant by the bar steward? I cannot imagine."

The TV camera scanned the Labour front bench, but the man in question — Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, graduate of Ruskin College, Oxford, and merchant marine bar steward, late of the good ship *Franconia* — was missing. As the Labour press conference televised that morning revealed, John Prescott was in Falmouth, of all places, briefly beamed in live on a giant screen like Stuart Hall on *It's a Knockout*, surrounded by happy campers cheering on the People's Party.

During the six long weeks of campaigning, Prescott will be far from the centre, touring the country in his own personalised charabanc, the Prescott Express, covering 10,000 miles in pursuit of the votes which Tony Blair cannot reach.

Mark Mardell of *Newsnight*, who caught up with him on Wednesday somewhere in South Wales, reported that he had asked an unnamed "Labour strategist" what Prescott's role would be and he received the reply: "I don't really care as long as he is as far away from London as possible." Mardell then went on to remind us of Prescott's 1992 gaffe, still pertinent today, in which he confessed that a

minimum wage would cause a loss of jobs.

Mardell asked Prescott whether he minded being kept from the action. The big man beamed. "Do you think anyone can shove me out of the centre? You must be joking!" But his laugh was hollow. Already his role in a Labour government is unclear. His hope to be a new George Brown, with a department of economic affairs to rival Gordon Brown's Treasury, has been stamped upon.

He sat in the back of his bus and dreamt about life after May 1. "Then I hope I will have played my part in the key strategy area which have been two years developing and brought to fruition. Then there will be a Labour government and Tony Blair will be Prime Minister and him and I will have a chat."

Although some like to compare Prescott to Enn



TV WATCH  
NICHOLAS WAPSHOTT

Bevin, Antler's dynamic working class Foreign Secretary, he is more like George Brown, Wilson's erratic deputy. In Maudie Saatchi's recent Tory horror TV broadcast which predicted the headlines under a wayward Labour government, Prescott was painted as a loose cannon — always threatening resignation and stomping off in protest at slights real and imagined.

It is unlikely we will be seeing much of John Prescott in the next six weeks, he has been marginalised, overloaded with ungainly, onerous campaigning in unlikely places. Prescott's gaffes, if there are any, will not be caught on camera.

But you can't silence Prescott for ever. If Labour wins, the man in the iron mask will deserve more than a big office and a big ministerial car, he will need a big job to go with them. Just what job may be the first big test of Tony Blair's first day in Downing Street. And whatever it is, there will be no keeping him off our screens.

## Chalker to quit world aid post

By POLLY NEWTON

BARONESS CHALKER will retire as Minister for Overseas Development after the election. It was announced yesterday. Lady Chalker, who as Lynda Chalker was MP for Wallasey for 18 years until she lost the seat to Labour in 1992, will leave the Conservative front bench in the House of Lords whatever the result of the election.

She said in her resignation letter to the Prime Minister: "As you know, I am deeply committed to continuing development work in Africa and now feel that I should do this independently."

John Major replied that she had brought to her job "a particularly effective combination of dedication, hard-headed analysis and genuine compassion. You have become not only a figure of world stature but also a close friend and trusted adviser of many international leaders."

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# Committee of MPs could lose the right to vet reports before they are published

## Nolan will seek new powers for standards chief

By Valerie Elliott and Arthur Leathley

LORD NOLAN, chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, is to call for Sir Gordon Downey to be allowed to publish all his reports on the conduct of MPs without having them vetted first by a Commons committee.

He will call for the change when he reviews the working of the Standards Commissioner and the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee this summer. There is concern among members of the Nolan committee, which originally proposed the creation of a Standards Commissioner, that if Sir Gordon is not given these extra powers the public will not be satisfied that Parliament can police itself. At present, the Standards and Privileges Committee generally considers his contentious reports before publication.

The Nolan committee wants Sir Gordon to be able to publish reports in the same way as parliamentary officers such as the Comptroller and Auditor

### EXONERATED

The interim report by the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee exonerates 15 of the 25 MPs accused of wrongdoing.

Tory: Michael Portillo, Sir John Wheeler, John Birt, David Mervin, Robert Atkins, Sir Gerard Vaughan, Sir Graham Bright, Sir Anthony Durand, Sir Malcolm Thornton, David Shaw and Vivian Bendall.

Labour: Chris Smith, Doug Hoyle, Gwyneth Dunwoody.

Liberal Democrat: Alan Bell.

official, at the expense of a committee of MPs.

Labour is committed to strengthening the Committee on Standards in Public Life. If it is elected to power, Senior figures recognise that the party will be under pressure to tighten the disciplinary powers of Sir Gordon. Derek Foster, the Shadow Public Services Minister, said last night: "If public confidence is to be restored, the Government of the day must ensure that Parliament keeps its House in order." However, the party is reluctant to cede the centuries-old power of MPs to investigate fellow members.

Lord Nolan also believes that Sir Gordon's work could be more completed more quickly if he reported to a sub-committee of MPs than to the full Select Committee on Standards and Privileges.

In the Nolan committee's first report, suggesting the appointment of a Standards Commissioner, they stated: "The Commissioner should have the same ability to make findings and conclusions public as is enjoyed by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration."

Peter Shore, a member of the Nolan committee who is retiring from the Commons after 33 years as a Labour MP, said: "People are dissatisfied with the way Parliament has looked after itself. We need to look at it all again in the light of the current situation which is far from satisfactory."

Nigel Jones, a Liberal Democrat member of the Standards and Privileges Committee, has already pressed for an independent system of investigation. However, Quentin Davies, a Tory member of the privileges committee, said that MPs had been "rigorous in observing the rules of natural justice." Removing powers from MPs would be "constitutionally obnoxious [and] damaging to the Commons."

## Payments from Greer were not all declared

By Andrew Pierce

THE lobbyist Ian Greer paid thousands of pounds to Sir Michael Grylls, the senior Tory MP at the centre of the cash for questions controversy, on behalf of a group of businessmen who knew nothing about the financial arrangement.

The payments formed a key part of Sir Gordon Downey's report into the long-running sleaze investigation.

Mr Greer made the payments to Sir Michael for his role as an adviser to the unitary tax campaign, which employed the lobbyist. The payments were not all declared by Sir Michael in the register of MPs' interests.

The "top-up" fees were in

addition to Sir Michael's payment of up to £10,000 a year from the campaign, which he registered. The disputed payments were in 1988-89.

Sir Michael was a leading adviser to the campaign, which was set up by some of the biggest blue chip companies in Britain. The campaign recruited Mr Greer to lobby against the system in some American states, which meant higher tax bills for subsidiaries of British firms.

Sir Michael, who is retiring at the election, said: "I spent a lot of time on the campaign. Here was a limit to the amount they could pay. Ian's firm said you are doing extra work and agreed supplementary payments. I have made this clear to Sir Gordon Downey."

Philip Howard, page 20  
Leading article, page 21



Tim Smith, MP for Beaconsfield, Neil Hamilton, MP for Tatton, Norman Lamont, MP for Kingston upon Thames, Michael Brown, MP for Cleethorpes, Nijj Deva, MP for Brentford and Isleworth, Sir Andrew Bowden, MP for Brighton Kempdown, Gerry Malone, MP for Winchester, and Sir Michael Grylls, MP for Surrey North West

## Constituency activists support named Tories

By Damian Whitworth and Carol Middledy

IN THE constituencies of the Conservative MPs who are understood to have been examined by Sir Gordon Downey but have yet to be exonerated, party members swung into line behind their candidates yesterday. But the first murmurs of discontent were already being heard in some quarters last night.

Neil Hamilton received the full backing of his local party chairman despite the controversy that has surrounded him. Alan Barnes, constituency chairman for Tatton, in Cheshire, rejected reports of a plot to deselect Mr Hamilton at the AGM today prior to the full publication of the report. "I remain totally confident that Mr Hamilton will be cleared by the committee and he will continue to receive maximum support from the Tatton Association," he said.

In Harrogate the constituency chairman Paul Meyrick refused to comment on how party members felt that the

candidate, Norman Lamont, who might be criticised in the final report. Mr Lamont was allegedly given money to aid his 1987 election campaign in Kingston upon Thames. One party member, who had voted to choose Mr Lamont as the candidate, said questions were bound to be raised.

Michael Brown may face a rough reception in his Cleethorpes constituency where a swing of just 3.5 per cent would see Labour take the seat. Peter Mills, one of just two Tory district councillors, warned Mr Brown to have a "plausible explanation" ready before he started canvassing the town's voters.

Deirdre Holloway, chairman of the Beaconsfield Conservative Association, said publication of the incomplete committee report changed nothing and members were fully behind Tim Smith. "As far as we are concerned, what is going on is to try to smear his name against the interests of natural justice," she said.

Par Smith, the agent in Sir Andrew Bowden's Brighton

Kempdown constituency, said: "The only adverse reaction there has been in this town about the allegations involving Sir Andrew has been orchestrated by the Labour Party. Our supporters and members are totally behind him."

The agent for the Brentford and Isleworth constituency of Nijj Deva said the local party was unconcerned that Mr Deva had yet to be exonerated by the report as they were convinced of Mr Deva's innocence of receiving irregular payments back in 1987 when he was fighting the seat of Hammersmith. "It is a matter for Hammersmith not Mr Deva," said the agent Jim O'Farrell.

No one at the party headquarters in the Winchester constituency of the health minister Gerald Malone or the constituency office of retiring Surrey North West MP Sir Michael Grylls was available to comment on allegations against the MPs. Two other MPs who have not been cleared have yet to be identified.

## Sour outburst sums up years of frustration

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

THE 1992-97 Parliament yesterday ended on a characteristically sour and bad-tempered note. John Major's outburst in the Commons revealed all his pent-up dislike of Tony Blair. This epitomised his frustrations throughout the Parliament about what he regards as his unfair treatment by the Opposition, the media and his colleagues. It has been a fractious and unsettled five years, both for the Government and for Parliament, in part because the 1992 election resolved so little.

Mr Major was given the benefit of the doubt in 1992 and his administration has subsequently achieved more than is commonly recognised. But it never really recovered momentum, or authority in the Commons, after Black Wednesday in 1992. The Tory party has been divided with a sullen minority never coming to terms with his leadership.

The Labour opposition has also been preoccupied with events outside the Commons — notably following Mr Blair's election as leader and his attempt to "reinvent" the party. All his main initiatives and Gordon Brown's big economic speeches have been outside the Commons. The Opposition has won a few important victories in the House, notably over VAT on domestic fuel, but that depended on support from Tory Euro-sceptics. Otherwise, Labour's main efforts have been aimed at voters, not MPs.

It was apt that the bitter exchanges at the final Prime Minister's exchanges of the parliament were about sleaze, that vague charge that has dogged the Tories for the past three years. A recurrent theme of this parliament has been MPs' uncertainty over their role and resentment at criticism of their standards.

Many Tory MPs, including quite a few ministers, regret that the Nolan committee was ever set up. But they fail to realise that the Commons had, and still has, to demonstrate it is capable of handling alleged abuses (isolated though I believe they are). That is why

the stalemate over the "cash for questions" allegations is so unsatisfactory.

Of course, it was bound to provoke a furious row and it has, incidentally, disrupted the start of the Tories' campaign and distracted attention from the good unemployment and inflation figures. No wonder Mr Major is so keen to see the back of Parliament.

Nonetheless, as the Opposition has argued, the Government could easily have put off proration until after Easter, though, as ministers claimed, there might not have been enough time for the unresolved allegations to be properly discussed and the affected MPs to put their case. The result is a mess which is unfair to the MPs, further damages the standing of Parliament and underlines the case for a review of self-regulation by the Nolan committee.

THE current parliament will, however, be remembered for an important shift in our political culture towards a rules-based system. This was first seen with the publication of *Questions of Procedure for Ministers* and was followed with the adoption of a new civil service code and the post-Nolan rules for MPs. Just after 2am yesterday this work was rounded off when the Commons approved a resolution on ministerial accountability to Parliament.

This sets out a new yardstick about how ministers should behave, stating that "it is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent errors at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly misled Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister." That resolution may still matter when yesterday's bitter ending to an unloved Parliament is long forgotten.

PETER RIDDELL

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# Midlands police criticised for poor clear-up record

By STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

WEST Midlands Police has one of the worst crime-fighting records in the country, according to a Home Office report published yesterday.

Officers in the force, one of the biggest in Britain, were accused by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary of relying too heavily on confessions by convicted prisoners rather than proper detections. Police also under-recorded or failed to record some crimes, something which may have made the force's crime figures seem better than was really the case.

In January, the Audit Commission said that West Midlands Police had performed poorly, despite extra manpower and money. West Midlands was bottom of the league of 43 provincial forces for solving burglaries, violence and for crimes solved per officer.

The force has also come under scrutiny over its role in the Bridgewater case, in which three men were freed last month by the Court of Appeal after serving 18 years for murder.

Yesterday's report is one of

the most critical issued by the inspectors for a force in recent years.

An inspection team led by John Stevens, former Chief Constable of Northumbria, found that the force cleared up only 12.5 per cent of crime by detection. The clear-up rate for domestic burglaries was even lower at 8 per cent.

Of all the crime cleared up, 45 per cent was accounted for by confessions made by prisoners during visits, something that the report strongly criticised. The report found that the percentage of crime cleared up by West Midlands Police using prison visits was twice the average for provincial forces.

Visits give the prisoners a chance to admit crimes which can be used to help their case before parole boards. They are normally not prosecuted for the offences they admit. In recent years, forces have been told to tighten up the procedure after allegations of corruption.

In the report the inspection team raised questions about whether the prison visits by



Stevens led inspection team in West Midlands

West Midlands officers were being properly monitored and recorded.

The inspectors urged Ted Crew, the new Chief Constable, to take action to stop his 7,100-strong force relying on confessions.

The inspectors also queried the recording of crimes and pointed to "anomalies" after taking a sample of what is included in crime records.

They found that the cost of criminal damage in some

cases had been underestimated, which meant they fell below Home Office guidelines for inclusion in official statistics. Other crimes were recorded as minor offences when they were more serious.

The inspectors believe that the problem lay with sloppy controls, rather than a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the force's performance, but the report said that the inaccuracies could affect the overall picture of crime.

Yesterday, Mr Crew, who took over as West Midlands Chief Constable last summer, said in a statement that the report recognised the force was in transition and many of the recommendations were now part of the force's strategy for the next year. They had already been identified by the time of the inspection last autumn and the strategy would aim to improve the force's performance.

Mr Crew said that Her Majesty's Inspectorate had "recognised the painful process the force is undergoing as it focuses its attention on improving its performance" and had also praised some of the force's work.



George Gamble and one of his birds. The rediscovered Percy will stay in China

## Sex convicts' pin-ups alarm jail inspector

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

PRISON staff need national guidelines on dealing with sex offenders who put up pictures of children and naked women in their cells, the Chief Inspector of Prisons says today.

Sir David Ramsbottom says it is not simply a question of banning the pictures. They illustrate behaviour that should be taken into account when assessing the risk that the men pose. "Sex offenders who have possible sexual fantasy material in their possession should be confronted and monitored," he says.

He and his inspectors had been concerned to see such pictures on noticeboards and walls in sex offenders' cells at Albany jail on the Isle of Wight. "Staff at Albany were more aware than many about the link between sexual fantasy material and offending, and many of them wanted clearer guidelines."

He praises the treatment programme for sex offenders and the staff running it at Albany, where 183 of the 425 prisoners were serving sentences for sex crimes when he visited it last June. Half those who completed treatment had a reduced arousal to deviant material.

Stephen Moore, governor of the jail since December, said the report was generally positive and acknowledged "the good work staff have been doing in creating a purposeful regime and tackling offending behaviour".

In a second report, Sir David condemns Wormwood Scrubs in west London, where a huge rebuilding programme and pressure of numbers meant the "prison has become mainly a warehouse". Most of the 1,027 inmates were locked up all day.

Richard Tilt, Director-General of the Prison Service, said that he shared Sir David's concern. A new management team had been appointed and he was confident the jail would regain its position as the service's flagship.

## Percy takes a slow boat

PERCY the pigeon, which disappeared during a race five years ago, has turned up in China (Paul Wilkinson writes). The bird vanished on a flight from Folkestone to its loft on George Gamble's allotment at Billingham, Teesside. Mr Gamble, 50, assumed it had fallen prey to a hawk or had had an accident.

But this week the North of England Homing Union received a fax from a fancier in Shanghai, where pigeon racing is a big sport. The bird had landed exhausted on a North Sea oil rig and was passed to a Chinese sailor, who took it home. Mr Gamble said: "I won't be asking for him back. Transport is a bit too expensive."

## Eating more carrots has visible benefits

By ROBIN YOUNG

SHOPPERS should be filling their baskets with carrots, according to researchers from the Institute of Food Research in Norwich.

Their work suggests that increasing the body's intake of beta carotene by four carrots a day would significantly enhance the immune system's ability to spot cancerous changes quickly. An increased intake of carotenoids may also delay, or possibly prevent, the development of cataracts. Carotenoids are also found in other fresh vegetables and fruit and in wholemeal cereals.

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## Nato expansion at uneasy heart of US-Russia talks

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN HELSINKI

PRESIDENT CLINTON and President Yeltsin met for talks last night in Helsinki, in what both sides predicted would be the toughest Russian-American encounter since the end of the Cold War.

With relations under heavy strain because of Moscow's objections to Nato's enlargement plans, the two leaders met at a dinner in the Finnish presidential palace for the ceremonial part of their two-day meeting.

Ahead of the main working session, which will take place today at the Finnish President's seaside residence, both sides kept up the pre-negotiating rhetoric, with the Russians sounding an optimistic note, while the Americans tried to play down any expectations of a breakthrough.

"President Clinton and I face difficult and serious talks," Mr Yeltsin said soon after arriving in Helsinki. "I think that Bill Clinton and his team are looking for a compromise to all controversial questions, so that we can depart once again as friends."

Madeline Albright, the US Secretary of State, sounded a different note, saying that the two men may use their meetings simply to "renew a good working relationship". She added: "I do not think that there are specific things that one should look for as bench-

marks. I think that this is a summit that is kind of reviewing business... not one where there is going to be specific things."

Even the arrival of the two leaders was starkly different. Mr Yeltsin, whose presence here was in doubt only a month ago because of pneumonia, looked the picture of health as he stepped confidently from his newly refurbished

jet for his first foreign trip in nearly a year.

Mr Clinton, by contrast, because of his recent knee injury, was lowered from Air Force One on a Finnair catering truck and then driven to a hotel in the Finnish capital in an ambulance.

The difference in their approach to the summit can be attributed largely to each country's pre-negotiating tactics. Both sides know very well that the plan to extend Nato membership to at least three of the former Soviet Bloc nations will go ahead at the Madrid summit in July.

The Russians, who regard the move as a direct threat to their security and a blow to their national prestige, want to squeeze as many concessions as they can from the American negotiators.

To offset the Kremlin's displeasure, the Americans have come prepared with a number of initiatives, on Moscow's future role in European security, arms control and economic assistance for Russia's troubled economy.

In particular, Mr Clinton is expected to offer Mr Yeltsin a "charter" that would formalise Nato's relationship with Russia and grant Moscow a say in Nato policy. The Russians want assurances that no Nato nuclear weapons or forces will be stationed in new member



Clinton arrival in invalid style after knee injury



President Yeltsin greets onlookers as he is welcomed in Helsinki for the summit

countries. There is also scope for fresh cuts in strategic arms.

Mr Clinton, who has praised the new Russian Cabinet, which is dominated by young reformers, is also expected to offer Moscow economic incentives in the form of loan guarantees to help to stimulate the Russian economy and a permanent seat at the G7 group of leading industrialised countries.

While this package of in-

ducements may sweeten the Nato pill, the Americans are aware that ultimately there is little they can do to placate Mr Yeltsin, who will never accept the alliance's expansion plans. However good the relationship between the two men, they must agree to disagree.

Tomorrow Mr Yeltsin must return back to Moscow to face what will almost certainly be a hostile reception from opposition Communist and nationalist leaders, who had written

off the summit even before it started. Viktor Ilyukhin, Communist head of the Russian parliamentary security committee, said yesterday that there was no point in talking to America and that Moscow's only alternative was to take "counter-measures".

He said: "Nothing constructive will come of this summit precisely because Nato's expansion is a foregone conclusion and Russia is powerless there."

## Drastic cuts in nuclear arms back on agenda

FROM MICHAEL BINYON IN HELSINKI

PRESIDENT Clinton will today urge President Yeltsin to make huge new cuts in Russia's nuclear arsenal, scrapping thousands of warheads so that America and Russia eventually have only about 2,000 nuclear weapons each.

Arms control, a central feature of East-West summits during the Cold War, is back on the agenda in Helsinki. President Clinton said before arriving here that he would discuss guidelines for a Start (strategic arms reduction treaty) 3 agreement with Moscow to continue the reductions agreed in earlier Start accords. They envisage cutting nuclear stockpiles by two thirds from the total at the Cold War's height.

America's proposals are based on a Nuclear Posture Review by the Pentagon three years ago, which concluded that nuclear weapons played a smaller part in American security than at any time in the nuclear age and that the country should concentrate on anti-missile defences to counter nuclear proliferation by rogue states. It recognised that another stage of negotiated arms control with Moscow would need to follow Start 2, and recommended reductions in non-strategic forces not covered by the treaty.

At present Russia still has between 10,000 and 15,000 nuclear weapons, almost ten times as many as America. The Pentagon review said this was more than Russia needed

for defence and more than it could keep under control during political turbulence.

So far, only the main provisions of the first Start agreement have been largely enacted. Three former Soviet republics - Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine - are now nuclear-free. America has spent almost \$2 billion in helping Russia to scrap nuclear warheads, and joint programmes are going ahead to prevent the theft of weapons and fissile material in Russia.

Start 2, which makes further deep cuts in nuclear arsenals to about 3,000-3,500 on each side, has not come into force, however, having run into strong opposition in the Russian parliament, which believes it strongly disadvantages Russia and is refusing to ratify it.

Until Start 2 is ratified, prospects for a follow-on treaty look dim. The Americans envisage Continuous Arms Reduction Talks (Cart) which would include strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. Washington believes that China, Britain and France should be included in a second phase of Cart.

But experts, including Ashworth Carter, a former Assistant Defence Secretary in the Clinton Administration, say scrapping all nuclear weapons is neither practical nor desirable until it is clear that other countries will do so, too. Few expect much progress here on beginning a new arms treaty.

## The bouncy East meets wheelchair-bound West

BY MICHAEL BINYON

THE American President arrived in Helsinki yesterday in a Finnair catering capsule. Never has a summit begun so humbly, never has protocol been so confused.

As Air Force One taxied to a halt in the crisp winter sun, a catering hoist edged forward to the plane's forward service entrance. President Ahtisaari and Finnish dignitaries shuffled and appeared perplexed: had the American President ordered a fresh round of duty-free drinks?

Suddenly, it was all clear. The red carpet was hastily re-laid to line up with the Finnair truck. Officials readied themselves for the salute. Slowly the hoist went up, and slowly it came down again. No one emerged. It was, it appeared, a dummy run by the Secret Service to see that the contraption was working. Up and down it went again. The back flap opened, and a man holding crutches peered

out suspiciously. Then Mr Clinton appeared. Smiling sheepishly as his wheelchair was pushed into view, he shook hands with the President and was manoeuvred to his limousine.

There were no speeches, no anthems, no inspections of the guard. There was not even a jaunty touch of Roosevelt. Mr Clinton had been doing some exercises with his physiotherapist on the flight over, but he was clearly not looking forward to the world's cartoonists having a field day.

President Yeltsin arrived a couple of hours later, and almost bounded down the steps, a picture of breezy health. Clearly relishing the contrast, he stood, smiling and bronzed (there must be sun-lamps in the Kremlin clinic beside his wife, Naina, while the Russian national anthem echoed across the tarmac. He did not attempt to sing: there are no words to the latest national hymn as the Russian parliament is still

locked in argument over what they should be.

He made an elaborate speech, thanking Mr Ahtisaari, thanking Finland, extolling good-neighbourly relations, damping down expectations of summit agreement and rounding off with hopes for world peace. It was almost as long as a Gorbachev statement, and certainly his longest public appearance for a year.

Both men then set off to check in. Mr Clinton has been moved out of the American Ambassador's residence as it has no lift, and is having to bunk down in the Intercontinental Hotel along with the entire travelling White House.

Mr Ahtisaari, an earthy, rot-poly man who appeals as much to Mr Yeltsin's bluntness as he does to Mr Clinton's Southern Good Old Boy charm, has lent his guests his house for the whole summit, and he and his wife have moved out.

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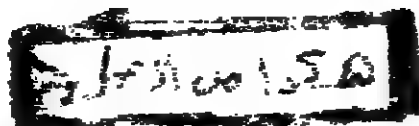
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Legal & Ge  
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Staff on



Colin Child and Paul White



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FRIDAY MARCH 21 1997



Inflation beater: George Paul, the Norwich Union chairman, tethers an errant inflatable sign as the insurer announced its flotation yesterday

## Norwich members to get £3bn flotation windfall

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

ALMOST three million members of Norwich Union will share a £3 billion windfall as a result of the insurer's £5 billion stock market flotation, it was announced yesterday.

Norwich Union is to issue 1.3 billion new shares to 2.9 million members. The average payout will be worth about £800. The shares will be split between the society's 1.8 million with-profit pensioners and savings policyholders as well as its 1.1 million non-profit holders of products such as annuities and term-assurance mortgages.

Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, which is advising Norwich Union, estimates the shares will be worth between 220p and 260p. The offer excludes NU's 4.1 million non-life insurance customers worldwide.

NU is also seeking to raise £1.75 billion in a rights issue to fund a restructuring. Of this, £1.5 billion will go to the with-profit fund, which will become part of a new company called

### CITY ADVISERS IN LINE FOR £145M BONANZA

THE cost of Norwich Union's flotation and rights issue will be £145 million, including a £25 million tax charge, equivalent to £26 for each qualifying member (Gavin Lumsden writes).

Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, which is co-ordinating the bookbuilding behind the rights issue, will get £40 million. The rest will be shared between other advisers, such as actuaries Tillinghast-Towers Perrin, and the cost of communicating with its members worldwide.

Norwich Union is making 120 separate

mailings. Unlike the converting building societies, it has been able to send a circular to the 2.9 million members who qualify for shares, reserving 18,000 copies of the full document for institutional investors.

Advisers have been huge beneficiaries of the rush to the stock market by building societies and other mutuals. The Halifax paid £413 million in connection with the acquisition of the Leeds Building Society and the conversion to a bank.

be sent in a mini-prospectus in May. NU will pay its first dividend in June 1998. It said a notional net dividend for 1996 would have been worth £205 million.

Proposing the demutualisation, Allan Bridgewater, chief executive, said it would bring out the true value of NU's subsidiaries, increase its free asset ratio from 10.7 per cent to 15.4 per cent and improve its access to external capital. Significantly, he refused to comment on whether the company had received offers to merge since it announced the plan to demutualise last October.

Richard Harvey, group finance director, said the restructuring would enable the with-profit fund to invest an additional £1.2 billion in equities. NU had already begun a series of derivatives trades to do this. Restating corporate accounts, he said NU had achieved £483 million of pre-tax profits last year.

Pennington, page 27

## Legal & General offers 'mis-selling' solution

BY MARTIN WALLER

LEGAL & GENERAL, one of the country's biggest insurers, claims it has come up with a way of helping the half a million people who were wrongly tempted out of occupational schemes and into personal pension plans.

The L&G was heavily implicated in the long-running, and still largely unresolved, pension mis-selling scandal. L&G has so far offered redress to only about 10 per cent of the 20,000 or more mis-selling cases it has identified.

David Prosser, chief executive, says the slow rate of progress requires the industry to take the initiative. He proposes issuing a legally binding guarantee to restore any loss of benefits

to pension plan holders wrongly advised by L&G representatives to opt out of their company scheme. "What matters to the individual is that they know, as a matter of certainty, that, when they retire, all the pension benefits to which they would have been entitled will be paid," said Mr Prosser.

L&G will earmark an unspecified proportion of the group's £20 billion life fund to back the guarantee. This sum will be subject to the usual checks by the Department of Trade and Industry on insurers. The scheme needs the agreement of the Personal Investment Authority, the consumer finance regulator. Yesterday it was sceptical.

Pennington, page 27

## ABN Amro in talks to buy Capel-Cure Myers

BY CARMINE MERRELL

ABN Amro Hoare Govett, the broking arm of the Dutch bank, has confirmed that it is in discussions over the purchase of Capel-Cure Myers Capital Management, the leading private client portfolio manager.

John Henderson, chief executive of Capel-Cure Myers Capital Management, said the firm had made the announcement in a bid to end market speculation about the future of the company. "There have been many rumours about a change of ownership," he said.

Capel-Cure Myers manages about £4 billion on behalf of private clients and pension funds. The company is

thought to have made £7 million in 1996. Capel-Cure Myers is currently 70 per cent owned by CIGL, a company formed from the collapse of a Canadian property and financial services group. At the end of last year, CIGL indicated that it wanted to sell its stake. Mr Henderson said: "We had preliminary discussions with a number of different parties." The company currently employs 450 staff. He added that a purchase by ABN Amro would represent the best fit for the company.

ABN Amro has been interested in increasing its asset management arm in this country for a long time. It was this ambition that led it to offer a job to Nicola Horlick, the former senior Morgan Grenfell fund manager.

## Staff on National Express gravy train

BY FRASER NELSON



Colin Child, left, and Phil White

NATIONAL EXPRESS, the transport group, is to give away about £30 million in shares as a loyalty bonus to the staff of its West Midlands bus company.

More than 4,000 workers of West Midlands Travel, which became part of National Express two years ago, will receive an average payout worth £7,800 as a reward for holding on to their shares for two years.

The staff, who were the owners of West Midlands Travel before it was taken over in a £260 million deal, will receive the windfall after the company's annual meeting on May 1. Six

million shares are being issued, which were set aside as part of the original deal.

The company, which last month became Britain's biggest train operator after winning the franchise for ScotRail, made an operating profit of £2.1 million from Gatwick Express and Midland Main Line in their first eight months. The two lines were expected only to break even. Phil White, chief executive, said the company, which formally takes over ScotRail next month, was confident that it could resolve the dispute that has left the country's rail system paralysed by one-day strikes.

National Express's investment in its

bus fleet helped the division to lift profits by 60 per cent, to £39.4 million. After a restructuring charge of £3.83 million, group pre-tax profits were 45 per cent ahead at £60.1 million. Earnings were 32.8p (27.9p) and a final dividend of 8.1p, due on May 2, lifts the total to 11.5p (10p).

Colin Child, the finance director, said that after cutting borrowings from £37.8 million to £5.1 million, the company was on the prowl for acquisitions. It is unlikely to buy any UK bus companies, he said, but would be interested in bidding for a part of London's Underground system.

Times, page 28

## Shares tumble as Greenspan overshadows inflation fall

BY JANET BUSH AND RICHARD THOMSON

LONDON shares plunged to their biggest daily loss since December, spooked once again by a warning of higher American interest rates from Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve.

The FT-SE 100 index closed 74.1 points lower at 4,258.1. The index now stands 186 points down from its all-time closing high on March 11, with all but 20 points of that slump occurring this week after John Major confirmed that the election will be on May 1.

The selling came despite news that British retail price inflation fell in February. Headline inflation edged lower to 2.7 per cent, from 2.8 per cent in January, while underlying inflation fell from 3.1 per cent to 2.9 per cent.

In December the FT-SE 100 was sent 88 points lower in a day after Mr Greenspan warned stock market investors against "irrational exuberance". This time he told the Joint Economic Committee of Congress that the American economy retained "a great deal of vigour" and that the job market remained strong.

In remarks widely interpreted as a strong hint that the US central bank will raise interest rates, he emphasised the need for the Fed to act pre-emptively to prevent inflation rising out of control.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average immediately fell 50 points before recouping some of its losses to stand around 35 points lower at midday. The mood in London was, if anything, somewhat darker than on Wall Street.

The market is not only contending with the inevitable

uncertainties of an election campaign, but also a growing perception that British interest rates will rise once the poll is over.

Despite yesterday's fall in inflation, the City was still worried by Wednesday's news of another sharp fall in unemployment, higher average earnings growth and a healthy bounce in retail sales. These hints of economic

### Mortgage lending falls in February

THE patchy nature of the housing market recovery was underlined yesterday by the latest mortgage lending figures from banks and building societies, showing a slight fall in February. But outside the housing market demand for credit remained strong.

Meanwhile, manufacturers said exports were now at their lowest level since 1993 because of the strength of sterling. The Confederation of British Industry said an improvement in domestic orders had compensated for the decline in exports. Page 26

strength were compounded yesterday by news of a sharp jump in broad money supply.

The fall in headline inflation was largely because of food prices, although the index was also depressed by household goods and personal goods prices. Housing and motor vehicle costs, plus clothing prices, pushed inflation higher.

Pennington, page 27  
Markets, page 28

## BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES		
FTSE 100	4258.1	(-74.1)
Yield	3.79%	
FTSE All share	2079.65	(-35.89)
Nikkei		
New York		
Dow Jones	8829.34	(-48.34)*
S&P Composite	791.85	(-3.92)*
US RATE		
Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	85 3/4%	(85 3/4%)
Yield	7.00%	(6.98%)
LONDON MONEY		
3-mth Interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)
Life long bill	100 1/4%	(100 1/4%)
Future (June)		
STERLING		
New York	1.8042*	(1.8082)
London	1.8042	(1.8073)
DM	2.2388	(2.2528)
FF	16.0710	(16.0581)
SFR	2.2051	(2.2052)
Yen	196.78	(196.09)
£ index	96.3	(96.3)
\$\$\$\$ \$: DOLLAR		
London		
DM	1.8001*	(1.8003)
FF	16.0610*	(16.0710)
SFR	2.2051*	(2.2052)
Yen	196.78	(196.09)
£ index	104.4	(104.1)
Tokyo close Yen	123.03	
COMMODITIES		
Oil		
Brent 15-day (June)	250.50	(250.25)
Gold		
London close	3361.25	(3346.85)

\* denotes midday trading price

Tokyo close Yen 123.03

Oil

Brent 15-day (June) 250.50 (250.25)

Gold

London close 3361.25 (3346.85)

\* denotes midday trading price

Guinness warns

Guinness gave warning that the soaring pound could knock about £100 million off its profits over the next two years. The company reported an 11 per cent rise in 1996 pre-tax profits to £975 million. Page 27

Tax fear

John Laing, one of Britain's largest construction companies, said Labour's proposed windfall tax could stifle recovery in the building trade, should the party come to power. Page 30

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TSB 12/97



# Home loans point to patchy recovery

By Robert Miller and Janet Bush

THE patchy nature of the housing market recovery was underlined yesterday by the latest mortgage lending figures from banks and building societies.

But, outside the housing sector, demand for credit in the economy appeared to remain strong and the M4 broad measure of money supply kept underscoring a growing view in the City that interest rates will have to be raised after the election.

The Building Societies Association (BSA) said that net and gross mortgage lending fell slightly in February, although approvals rose to £2.9 billion from £2.5 billion in January. Members of the association recorded a £335 million monthly fall in net advances from £1 billion in January

while monthly gross advances declined by £163 million to £2.6 billion. Savings inflows of £1.6 billion last month were higher than January's £1.1 billion.

Adrian Coles, BSA director-general, said: "Building society net and gross mortgage lending fell slightly in February on both a seasonally adjusted and unadjusted basis. On a seasonally adjusted basis net advances are 13 per cent higher than last year."

Mr Coles, who said the latest figures show a moderate and patchy recovery is continuing, added: "This slight downturn in lending should not be taken as an indication that the recovery in the housing market is faltering. We are seeing some areas recovering very strongly indeed while others are still waiting to see the full benefits of the upturn."

The British Bankers' Association said that mortgage lending by the major UK banks, to be joined shortly by the Alliance & Leicester and later in the summer by the Halifax, Woolwich and Northern Rock, rose by £743 million compared with £506 million in January.

The BBA, which said that the monthly home loan figures remained comfortably above the recent average, added that consumer credit rose strongly by £626 million, of which credit cards accounted for £231 million.

The figure that attracted most concern in the City was a 1.4 per cent jump in M4 money supply in February, much bigger than economists had expected. This took its annual growth to 11.3 per cent from 10 per cent in the year to January, so taking M4 even further above the upper limit of the Government's 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range.

Although M4 has been distorted by the introduction of the gilt repo market, economists still said that its rapid growth was a worry.

## Provisions take toll of Renault

RENAULT, the French automaker, suffered a net loss of Fr5.25 billion in 1996, the company said.

Losses were struck after costs and provisions of Fr3.91 billion, particularly for closing the group's plant near Brussels, and for the social plan the company must implement in France in connection with its restructuring plans.

As a result of the provisions, the group incurred an operating loss of Fr5.99 billion, compared with a profit of Fr1.26 billion in 1995. Excluding restructuring charges, the operating loss would be Fr1.77 billion.

Automotive activities lost Fr2.45 billion, excluding provisions. The commercial vehicle arm had an operating loss of Fr705 million.



Tom Farmer, the chairman, said yesterday that the record had been achieved despite flat market conditions

## Sterling 'has delivered untimely exports blow'

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

BRITAIN'S manufacturing exports are now at their lowest level since 1993 because of the strength of sterling. The latest evidence of the UK's weakening export performance will be a blow to the Government ahead of the general election in the midst of a run of good figures on inflation and unemployment.

In its latest monthly trends survey, the Confederation of British Industry today says that sterling's continued strength has led to export demand for UK manufactured goods reaching its lowest level since November 1993.

The survey of more than 1,000 firms in 50 industries, accounting for half the UK's manufacturing exports, shows that 35 per cent of companies consider their export books below normal. Only 17 per

cent say their export books are above normal.

This net balance of 18 per cent of companies citing below normal export levels marks a rapidly accelerating trend — down from a net balance of 12 per cent recording below normal exports in February, and 8 per cent in January.

Sudhir Junankar, CBI associate director of economic analysis, says the findings "show that the strength of sterling is beginning to take its toll on export orders".

Manufacturers hope that falling export orders can be offset by domestic sales, and the CBI's survey gives some support to that, showing that home demand is stronger than export performance. Total orders are now broadly stable after an improvement in demand. With a fifth of firms

saying that total orders are above normal and 21 per cent suggesting they are below usual levels, the net negative balance of 1 per cent compares with a figure of minus 5 per cent for February and is the closest that overall order books have been to normal levels since September 1995.

Suggesting that this improvement in domestic demand has "more than compensated" for the fall in exports, the CBI says that with stocks at more than adequate levels, manufacturers have become more confident about raising output.

However, the survey sounds a warning note on inflation. A net 9 per cent of companies expect domestic prices to rise over the next four months, compared with only 4 per cent last month.

## Kwik-Fit wheels in a record

By Fraser Nelson

REFURBISHMENT and construction of new sites helped Kwik-Fit, the car parts repair company, to return record profits last year. Its number of worldwide sites broke through 1,000.

The company opened 31 green field sites and added 83 centres to its national network over the year, which helped pre-tax profits grow 19 per cent to £43.3 million on sales up 17 per cent at £427 million.

Tom Farmer, chairman, said that the results had been achieved in spite of flat market conditions. The group continued to lift its market share in The Netherlands. The division had attracted a million motorists.

Earnings grew to 17.2p (14.7p) per share. The dividend rises to 5.6p (5p), with a final 3.5p due May 13.

Up to speed, page 33

## Jury in the Gokal trial due to retire

By Jon Ashworth

THE jury in the trial of Abbas Gokal, the former head of the Gulf Group, is today expected to retire to consider its verdict.

Mr Justice Buxton is due to complete his summing up this morning. The trial opened at the Old Bailey in September last year.

Mr Gokal, 61, denies one count of false accounting and a second of conspiracy to defraud. It is alleged that, between 1985 and 1991, he conspired with various officials of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) to falsify loan documents, board minutes, and other documents, with a view to enabling BCCI to secretly fund the Gulf Group.

The court heard that the Gulf Group was indebted to

BCCI to the tune of more than \$1.2 billion.

Mr Gokal is further alleged to have conspired with BCCI officials to create a financial structure designed to deceive Price Waterhouse, BCCI's auditor. The structure was allegedly controlled by, but not traceable to, the Gulf Group, and was designed to channel funds to Gulf from BCCI.

The Gulf Group was based in Geneva and had extensive interests in shipping and trading. The jury was told that Mr Gokal had fled to Pakistan after the company collapsed in 1992, but was arrested in Frankfurt two years later, when the aircraft on which he was travelling to New York put down to refuel. He was later extradited to the UK.

## Power programme 'should be delayed'

By Christine Buckley, Industrial Correspondent

THE programme to enable households to shop around for their electricity supply has slipped so far behind schedule that a delay should be considered, MPs said yesterday.

The all-party Trade and Industry Select Committee also criticised the management of the ambitious project.

Referring to the industry's efforts to set in place the mechanics that will enable the country's 25 million electricity consumers to switch electricity supplier by April 1998, the committee said: "Given they will have had

eight years notice since vesting, this progress is substantially less than we would have expected to see some 12 months before implementation." It concluded: "The possibility of a short delay should not be excluded."

The committee also calls for an inquiry into the cost benefits of opening the market to competition. MPs are concerned that the costs of implementing competition should not outweigh or balance the benefits.

Pennington, page 27

### TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank	Bank	Bank
	Swiss	Swiss	Swiss	Swiss
Australia \$	2.13	1.97	0.649	0.594
Austria Sch	19.88	18.35	3.171	2.941
Belgium Fr	36.30	34.00	2.45	2.23
Canada \$	2.307	2.147	11.34	10.54
Cyprus Cyp£	0.038	0.038	281.00	282.50
Denmark Kr	10.81	10.01	7.08	6.26
Finland Mk	8.57	7.92	239.00	222.00
France Fr	5.45	5.00	13.10	12.10
Germany DM	2.34	2.03	2.43	2.25
Greece Dr	462	410	208000	194000
Hong Kong \$	13.00	12.03	1.088	1.000
Iceland Kr	120	100	1.000	1.000
Ireland P£	1.07	0.98	1.000	1.000
Israel Sh	5.07	5.02	1.000	1.000
Italy Lit	2048	2048	1.000	1.000
Japan Yen	210.30	194.20	1.000	1.000

### BUSINESS ROUNDUP

## Lloyd's hearing opens at High Court

THE first in a series of hearings to deal with alleged fraud at Lloyd's of London opens at the High Court in London today. A number of names are refusing to pay funds owed under the reconstruction and renewal (R&R) plan, on the grounds that they were fraudulently induced to enter the market. They say their membership of Lloyd's should be rescinded in these circumstances, removing the obligation to pay. Lloyd's says the names have entered into third party contracts with policyholders and are hence bound to membership. If so, the court will address whether the names are obliged to pay their premiums to Equitas, the new reinsurance company, before pursuing any fraud claims.

Meanwhile, Sally Noel, the Lloyd's campaigner, has postponed plans to lead a march on Downing Street, demanding a government enquiry into Lloyd's. Mrs Noel is concerned that the march will attract "an unwanted, rebellious and fanatical element".

## Jardine Matheson falls

JARDINE MATHESON, the Hong Kong trading conglomerate that owns a 50 per cent stake in Jardine Fleming, suffered a 29 per cent fall in net profits to US\$300.2 million after a \$56 million charge for non-recurring items. These included a \$26 million charge for regulatory breaches at Jardine Fleming Investment Management in London and Hong Kong. Dairy Farm International, the food retailing arm of the trading group, also incurred reorganisation costs at Kwik Save in the UK and Franklins in Australia.

## Utilities under fire again

THE privatised utilities came in for a fresh barrage of criticism yesterday over excessive profits and "fat cat" pay from an all-party group of MPs. The Public Accounts Committee, which monitors public spending, demanded tougher action from the utility regulators to ensure that profits are curbed and that companies think twice before awarding top executives large pay packages. The attack follows criticism earlier this week in a Trade and Industry Select Committee report on energy regulation.

## Securicor warning

SECURICOR, the security group dominated by its Celtel investment, has given warning that stiff competition has accelerated the rate at which customers are "churning" mobile phones. Its shares fell 21p to 294½p. Orange also suffered, falling 1½p to 205p and Vodafone dropped 8½p to 274p. Securicor has taken an £18 million charge to change its accounting policies, assuming that customers would return phones after two years, not three. Its communications division is now expected to return a loss of £9 million in the first half.

## Hanson expands in US

HANSON, which became a building materials company after its demerger, has expanded its construction business in America with the acquisition of Concrete Pipes and Products through its Cornerstone Construction & Materials unit for £78 million. Chris Collins, deputy chairman, said: "This is our new strategy in action." After the integration of Concrete Pipes, Cornerstone will be one of the largest concrete pipe producers in the US.

## Merger for US banks

FIRST BANK SYSTEM is to acquire US Bancorp for \$8.5 billion in an all-shares deal that will form America's 14th-largest bank. The deal between First Bank, based in Minneapolis, and US Bancorp, a regional bank based in Portland, Oregon, will result in the loss of about 4,000 jobs, the banks said. First Bank said that it would take pre-tax charges of \$625 million for costs related to the merger, which was expected to close by the end of June.

## Servisair soars 20%

SERVISAIR, the airport services company, achieved a 20 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £7.1 million last year, reflecting continued growth in passenger air traffic and cargo volumes. Turnover increased 20 per cent to £153.9 million. Earnings were 19 per cent higher at 12.7p a share. A final dividend of 3.45p a share lifts the total 19 per cent to 5.1p. Tony McCann, the chairman, said he expected an "acceleration of outsourcing opportunities from airlines".

## Boots Contract purchase

BOOTS Contract Manufacturing, part of The Boots Company, has paid £15.2 million to acquire a French toiletries manufacturer. Roval is the leading supplier of own-brand toiletries in France. It also has a growing business in Spain and Portugal. Its turnover last year was about £27 million. It employs more than 200 people in France and Spain. Boots already operates BCM Cosmétique in France. The new acquisition will create a combined French turnover of almost £40 million.

## The Standard Life Assurance Company Annual General Meeting

The 171st Annual General Meeting of the Company will be held in Standard Life House, 30 Lothian Road, Edinburgh on Tuesday 22 April 1997 at 2.30pm.

A member entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote. A proxy need not be a member.

By order of the Board of Directors  
Alan R Forbes  
Secretary  
Edinburgh, 20 March 1997

Policyholders may obtain a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts, including the agenda, by writing to the Customer Service Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning (0131) 245 2668. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.

STANDARD LIFE

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# SEX

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pound

Proceeds to  
Ocean



□ Insurers must speed up mis-selling restitution □ Power deregulation should be delayed □ Election promises cost money

## L&G's dubious moral high ground

□ THERE is a body of opinion that believes most of our big insurance companies should be put out of business by government or regulatory fiat. Legal & General, the mighty Prudential, Pearl Assurance, they should all be shut down, because their sins in the late 1980s make them no better than Barlow Clowes, the Titan pyramid selling schemes or those wretched ostrich farms.

This is not all hyperbole; the mis-selling of personal pensions that started in 1988 was both illegal and immoral — and it was being carried out by some of the finest names in financial services.

But in the real world you do not shut down the likes of the Pru — although you do go hunting with your elephant gun for the goats of the industry, the small independent financial advisers that did much the same thing.

Now one of the big names has come up with its own solution. Legal & General is proposing a set-aside of a billion pounds or more by the industry to guarantee meeting its future obligations. These are to put those people it led astray back where they would have been if they had stayed with their occupational pensions all along.

At present the insurers are forced to adopt a case-by-case approach. They look at each individual example, go to the

relevant occupational pension that the investor has opted out of, and then write a cheque to top up the existing pension to where it should have been. This is horribly slow, for reasons that are in dispute. Of 538,000 cases of potential mis-selling identified, fewer than 11,000 have been offered redress.

If that reserve fund is in place, argues Legal & General, then we need not hurry because those in any doubt know they will get their money in the end, and can sleep at night without worrying whether death or retirement will intervene before the necessary sums can be done.

There are two cynical responses to this plan, which is likely to be accepted with alacrity by other insurers if it gains regulatory blessing. One is that L&G is trying to claim the moral high ground while merely agreeing to meet its existing obligations. The other is that the group is trying to identify a tangible limit on the monetary damage it faces from mis-selling, to the benefit of its credit rating, share price, and so on.

Such cynicism is probably

justified, even if unsophisticated investors might draw some crumbs of comfort from yesterday's news. The money will indeed be there on retirement — except that it would have been all along.

The Personal Investment Authority, which in November tried to speed up the process of extracting the necessary data from occupational schemes, has set an unofficial target of a 90 per cent clear-up rate for mis-selling by the end of this year. This is a hard one to hit, but the insurers should still try, and not be allowed to use their own pensions guarantees to drag their feet.

### When the bugs come out to play

□ IN A performance as mealy-mouthed as it is weak-kneed, the Trade and Industry Select Committee looking at the deregulation of electricity in a year and ten days says it is, yes, just possible that a slight delay will be needed.

In this, MPs are falling in line with both common sense and the



majority of the people who will actually have to create a free market in power, allowing you and I to shop around with a range of companies keen to sell to us. This is an extension of the similar choice already opening up in the gas industry — but with one enormous difference.

Those independents now offering cheap gas are in a better position to cut your quarterly bills than their counterparts in electricity a year hence because the cost of distribution down the pipelines, which will continue to be born by BG, successor to British Gas, is fixed at about 40 per cent of that bill. This means the independents have 60 per cent to play for. Of your electricity bill, 90 per cent is distribution

and generation cost, or thereabouts, and only 10 per cent supply, which should therefore be inherently less profitable.

This begs the question whether we need a competitive market at all. But the real problem is the computers needed to track the supply of power to 20 million homes, a point accepted by the select committee. All 14 electricity distributors, including the two Scots, must have these running by the turn of the year to allow three months of testing.

Any competent computer technician would say that such a system needed at least a year to iron out the bugs, but this is impossible because the specifications are not yet agreed with the regulator. The danger is that on All Fools' Day next year the bugs come out to play. Months later, with a large number of electricity bills having gone out wrong, it is impossible to work out electronically who took what power from whom, and who has paid.

The only people forcing through this timetable are the politicians at the Department of Trade and Industry. According to the opinion polls, they will not

be here come June. This at least allows their successors the opportunity of a graceful extension of that April deadline.

### Voting the Norwich way

□ TWO hundred years ago, when the Norwich Union was founded, general elections were much more fun for those privileged few who were entitled to vote. Election promises meant something, namely cash. Candidates knew votes were valuable and did the decent thing. Unless the opinion polls are radically wrong, it would scarcely be worthwhile for the parties to pay much for votes on May 1, even if it were legal.

Up in Norwich, however, they still know that votes are valuable. When members exercise theirs in four weeks' time, the board will have no compunction about buying them. Quite right too. Under the original proposals, it seemed that only the 1.8 million holders of with-profits life or pensions policies had a full interest in the fund and would

get the free shares that represented their stake in it. But conversion from mutual to plc requires a three-quarters majority, and holders of non-profit policies have voting rights too.

So 1.1 million of them are to be offered 150 shares each, worth an estimated £375, compared with a minimum of £750 for with-profit policyholders. What better illustration of the value of democracy and the need to protect your franchise, whether in the affairs of state, the European Union or the East Anglian version.

Unlike customers of building societies, with-profits policyholders could also win a continuing benefit from conversion. Some £1.5 billion new money will be used to buy non-life businesses from the life fund, making it more flexible, with a better chance to perform competitively.

### Greenspan III

□ ALAN Greenspan's first grim warnings bludgeoned Wall Street. The next version, dubbed Greenspan II: the Sequel, left blasé traders urging the Fed Chairman to put up or shut up. Put up interest rates that is. Yesterday's hint that he might do just that on Tuesday only shocked traders for a few hours. Greenspan's code words were: "The performance of the economy remains quite favourable."

## Guinness puts cost of strong pound at £100m

By ALAN MURRAY

GUINNESS gave warning yesterday that the soaring pound could knock about £100 million off its profits over the next two years.

The drinks company said that if the pound remained at current levels, profits this year would be depressed by £60 million, and by a further £40 million next year.

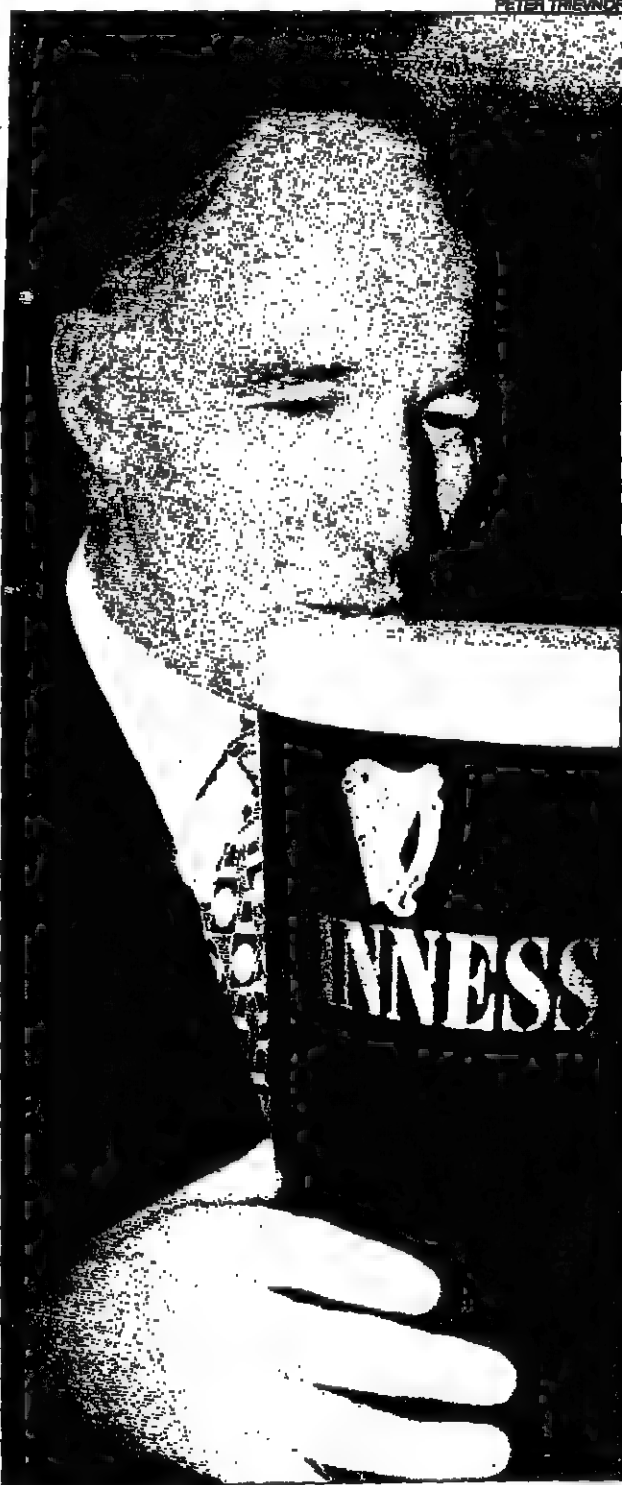
Tony Greener, chairman, said most of the currency hit related to profits translation and that underlying growth should accelerate this year. Western markets were improving for the first time since the recession, he added.

Guinness also hinted that it would shortly launch another buy-back, with market predictions suggesting that it will repurchase around £100 million of shares. The company has returned £645 million to shareholders through buy-backs in the past year. Guinness shares rose 15½p to a two-year high of 501½p.

The company recorded an 11 per cent rise in full year profits, excluding tax, to £975 million — slightly ahead of forecasts. Overall turnover rose 3 per cent to £4.73 billion, while the total dividend was up 8 per cent to 16½p.

Operating profits in the spirits division were flat, at £678 million, although volumes rose 1 per cent. Sales of Johnnie Walker Red Label rose 4 per cent, while sales of single malts jumped 20 per cent. But overall sales of whisky fell 1 per cent. Guinness has raised spirits prices by an average of 1.5 per cent. It plans to raise prices 3.5 per cent next month in the UK. Guinness doubled expenditure on new brands to £17 million. Marketing expenditure rose 10 per cent, to £332 million, and the company said it would maintain double-digit growth in marketing spend this year.

Guinness Brewing Worldwide increased profits 6 per cent, to £283 million. Sales of Guinness stout rose 5 per cent, with total beer volumes rising 4 per cent. There was also a strong performance from Kilkeny, which is now available in 5,000 outlets in the UK. Marketing investment rose 8 per cent to £205 million, while the Irish pub concept, which is supported by Guinness, grew



Tony Greener toasts a two-year high in the share price

by a third, with a total of 1,250 outlets in 37 countries. Cruzcampo, the Spanish subsidiary, faced another difficult year, with overall volumes falling 3 per cent. But restructuring had helped productivity to rise 14 per cent and profits stayed at £22 million.

The contribution from M&S Hennessy Vintners (LVMH), in which Guinness holds a 34 per cent stake, rose 2 per cent to £113 million. A final dividend of 11.55p is payable on May 20.

Tempus, page 28

### Whitbread sells Pizza Piazza chain for £11.25m

Whitbread yesterday sold the Pizza Piazza restaurant chain to a management buy-in team for £11.25 million.

Passion for Food, the company formed to complete the purchase, beat off tough competition for the chain from Queensborough Holdings, which recently recruited Michael Guthrie, the founder of BrightReasons, to launch a restaurant division.

Whitbread acquired the chain as part of its £46 million purchase of the BrightReasons restaurant chain at the end of last year. But the company made it clear that it would put the chain up for sale as it overlapped with its existing Pizza interests which include Pizza Hut.

Pizza Piazza has 20 upmarket pizza and pasta restaurants in the South of England. Jeremy Long, who was formerly managing director at Pavilion Services, will serve as chairman of the new company, while Ivan Taylor, who was managing director of BrightReasons, becomes chief executive. The buy-in is being backed by 3i and Banque Indosuez.

Whitbread shares closed down 14½p at 773½p, while shares in Queensborough fell 1½p to 32p.

### APV blames market for fall

Tough market conditions were blamed for a sharp fall in profits at APV, the supplier of equipment and services to the food industry.

In the year to December 31, pre-tax profits were £15 million compared with £26.9 million a year earlier, on turnover that fell to £772 million from £881.9 million.

Restructuring costs were £16 million compared with £10.5 million a year ago. Orders in the first two months of this year are 15 per cent lower than a year ago.

Earnings per share were 3.7p (7.2p) and the final dividend of 1.7p (1p) gives a maintained full-year dividend of 2.7p, which is payable on July 1. Tempus, page 28

### Usborne ahead

Usborne, the agricultural services group headed by Lord Parkinson, has increased its first-half pre-tax profits to £416,000. Fertiliser blending performed ahead of targets, but the company is again not paying an interim dividend.

## Wm Morrison moves South

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

WM MORRISON, the Yorkshire supermarkets group, is to open its first branches in the South of England next year.

The group, which did not open any new stores in 1996, is planning five this year and five next year. It expects to create up to 2,250 new full- and part-time jobs in 1998.

The branches in the South will be at Eridge in Kent and Banbury in Oxfordshire. The other three will be in Yorkshire.

The company, headed by Kenneth Morrison, chairman and managing director, announced its expansion plans yesterday along with its results for the year ended February 2. It made a pre-tax profit of £135.8 million compared with £127.1 million a year ago.

Analysts said that while the profit figures were good, trading was disappointing. Like-



Morrison: new stores

for-like sales were up 1.5 per cent and growth slowed in the first few weeks of this year to just 0.4 per cent.

Earnings per share were 11.01p (10.67p) and the final dividend of 1.375p (1.125p), payable on May 16, gives a full-year dividend of 1.7p, up from 1.4p.

## Talks on Tesco's Irish bid resume

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

TALKS between Tesco, the supermarket group, and Associated British Foods (ABF) about the purchase of the food manufacturer's Irish supermarkets were back on yesterday, Tesco said, after breaking down late on Wednesday over price.

Sources close to the company said that a deal, which would propel Tesco to market leadership in Ireland, could be ready today or early next week, but there is still a slim chance that no compromise over price will be reached.

Tesco is expected to pay between £600 million and £650 million for the 110 stores which make up the Stewarts and Crazy Prices chain in Northern Ireland and the Quinns chain in the Irish Republic. The businesses generated around £1.1 billion of sales last year and

some £55 million of operating profits.

The deal would give Tesco a 26 per cent share of the market in the Republic of Ireland and a 30 per cent share in Northern Ireland.

Tesco is understood to have walked out of the talks on Wednesday evening because ABF, which is run by Garry Weston, was insisting on too high a price.

Tesco, the market leader in Britain, has one Metro store in Northern Ireland. Together with J Sainsbury, it has run into difficulties obtaining planning permission for large stores there.

Safeway's name has been linked to a bid for the whole or part of Wellworths, the supermarket group owned by Fitzwilliam group, the investment vehicle of Tony O'Reilly, the Heinz chief.

## Highlights from Standard Life's Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 15 November 1996

### The Group

- Group assets under management increased by some £6bn to just under £50bn. Total new premiums worldwide increased by almost 30% to £2.6bn.
- For companies such as Standard Life, which are financially strong and operationally efficient, mutualism is clearly in the best interests of current and future policyholders. The Company is, therefore, not presently considering demutualisation.

### United Kingdom

- 1996 was an exceptional year for new business, with an increase in total new premiums of over 40%.
- Standard Life's reputation with Independent Financial Advisers as the premier life assurance company was reflected in the awards received from them during the year; these included 'IFA Company of the Year'.
- The Company took possession of a new Head Office in Lothian Road, Edinburgh.

### Canada

- Investment performance was again in the top quartile in independent surveys.
- The Company undertook a number of initiatives designed to meet the needs of its customers including the launch of a Customer Services Centre and the introduction of a Customer Satisfaction Guarantee.

### Republic of Ireland

- Annual premium new business increased by nearly 20% and single premium business by almost 90%.
- Group pensions business also grew strongly as a result of outstanding investment performance.

### Germany

- Significant progress has been made in building a business in Germany following the opening of an office in Frankfurt.

### Spain

- 1996 was a very successful year for Prosperity SA which now sells through 31 branches. Total new premiums increased by 40%.

### India

- Standard Life continues to work with its joint venture partner, Housing Development and Finance Corporation, on the initial preparatory work required to set up a new life assurance company.

### China

- A Representative Office was opened in Shanghai and a General Manager (Pacific Region) was appointed in April.

The Annual Report and Accounts, including the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting to be held on Tuesday 22 April, will be available from Tuesday 1 April. Policyholders may obtain a copy by writing to the Customer Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning (0131) 245 2668. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.

STANDARD LIFE

The Standard Life Assurance Company\* is a mutual company registered in Scotland (no 524). Head Office Standard Life House 30 Lothian Road Edinburgh Tel (0131) 225 2532. The Standard Life marketing group includes Standard Life Pension Funds Limited\*\* Standard Life Trust Management Limited\*\* Standard Life Fund Management Limited\*\*

\*Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority \*\*Regulated by IMRO

Tempus, page 28

### Proceeds to be reinvested after deal with US rival

## Ocean sells OIL for £328m

By CARL MONTITH

OCEAN, the logistics and marine services group, is selling OIL, its offshore oil services business to Tidewater, an American competitor, for £328 million.

The sale is expected to generate a pre-tax profit of £228 million and Ocean Group will reinvest the proceeds in MSAS, its logistics business. John Allan, chief executive, said: "This sale will enable us to accelerate our progress towards our primary objective — to become a world leader in the fast-growing global logistics market."

Mr Allan said that Tidewater had approached Ocean with an offer for the

offshore business. He added that OIL was a capital-intensive business that would require heavy investment in due course, and that he believed Ocean was selling the business well into the growth cycle. OIL has a fleet of 100 ships servicing offshore oil installations in the North Sea, West Africa, the Middle East and South America. The deal will reinforce Tidewater's position as the market leader in the business at a time of increased activity in offshore exploration. Tidewater is the biggest operator in the Gulf of Mexico but has little presence in the North Sea or West Africa. Last year, OIL made an operating profit of £21.1 million and had capital employed of £91.8 million.

Ocean had balance sheet gearing of only 6 per cent at the year end and the deal will give the company substantial cash resources for acquisitions. Mr Allan said he was seeking opportunities to extend Ocean's logistics business in the US, Europe and Southeast Asia.

The sale of OIL reinforces the shift in Ocean's business from asset-based to information technology-based services. In 1995, the company announced a £26 million restructuring of the group and last year managed to raise operating margins at MSAS to 3 per cent a year ahead of schedule.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

# Greenspan sends London and New York tumbling

THE mere threat to raise US interest rates by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, was enough to send financial markets on both sides of the Atlantic into a tail-spin.

He was again giving evidence to Congress and said that while he saw no sign of inflationary pressure, any delay in pre-empting it would jeopardise economic growth.

His comments struck a note with those investors who expect the next rise in rates to signal the start of the long-awaited correction in financial markets.

Within minutes of his comments, the Dow Jones industrial average had plunged almost 80 points. It also left the FT-SE 100 index nursing a fall of 7.1, at 4,258.1, having been 80.7 down at its worst.

London had opened lower and beat a steady retreat throughout the session. The expected drop in the inflation rate was not enough to counter the uncertain political outlook and the almost certain prospect of a rise in domestic rates after the general election.

But it seems that yesterday's sell-off had at last extended to the second liners with the FT-SE mid-250 losing 87.7 at 4,555.2.

Investors appear to be adopting a defensive stance ahead of the general election, which may account for the revival of interest in the food retailers. The latest AGF survey showed Tesco, up 5p at 339p, gaining ground against J Sainsbury, its biggest rival.

But Sainsbury is also gaining ground at the expense of Sainsbury and celebrated with a rise of 7.1p at 353p. Wm Morrison, which came in with profits matching market expectations, finished 2.1p firmer at 149.1p.

The City gave the thumbs-up to full-year figures from Guinness, 15.1p dearer at 501.1p.

Securicor fell 2.1p to 294.1p after shareholders were told at the annual meeting that write-offs totalling £18 million were to be made. But brokers say the setback for the shares should prove short-lived.

Henderson Crosswhite estimates the break-up value of the group to be worth at least 400p a share, including its 40 per cent stake in Celnet, which is reckoned to carry a price-tag of at least £1 billion.



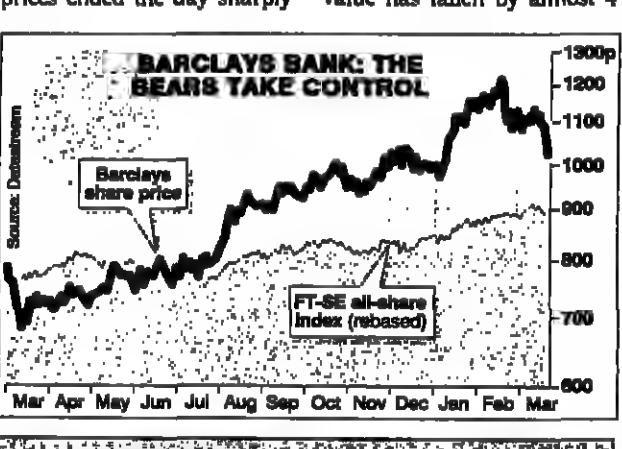
Ian Menzies-Gow, right, and Mark Pullen of Geest, down 2.1p, who have raised profits 73 per cent after disposing of bananas

British Steel, up 1.4p at 159.1p, is expected to announce today plans to axe around 5,000 jobs over the next five years. The group is accelerating its restructuring programme, having already made known its desire to shed up to 1,000 jobs a year. The group has blamed the strong pound for the move, claiming it has only added to the

lower. Barclays fell 35p to £10.32. HSBC was 35p down to £14.75. Lloyds TSB dropped 22.1p to 476.1p. Royal Bank of Scotland was 21p off at 530p. Abbey National was 14p lower at 718p. National Westminster was 17p down at 686.1p, and Bank of Scotland 13.1p cheaper at 315.1p. Even Standard Chartered, Lehman's favourite

PizzaExpress is going from strength to strength with the price leaping 32.1p to a high of 710.1p. That compares with last year's low of 216p. The group is opening a further 20 cash generating outlets. Credit Lyonnais Laing and Kleinwort Benson, the brokers, are both buyers of the stock.

problems of operating in the depressed steel market. The banks came under a cloud after Lehman Brothers, the US securities house, turned bearish of the sector after its recent strong run. Credit Lyonnais Laing, the broker, which is thought to have built up a large bull position in bank shares this year, may be to differ, but prices ended the day sharply



stock in the sector, finished 21p down at 827.1p. Worries about regulatory pressure dragged Stagecoach a further 17.1p lower at 671p, stretching the loss over the past couple of days to 57p. National Express fell 9.1p to 520.1p after estimates.

Britton Estates is also blaming the strong pound for its misfortunes. Its net asset value has fallen by almost 4

per cent, while the shares fell 20.1p to 182p. News of difficult trading conditions which are expected to affect first-half results "significantly" left Carisbrook Shipping down 10p at 70.1p.

Vision Group tumbled 70p to 250p after warning that a "slippage" in implementation programmes that would affect second-half results. Profits in the first six months of the video conferencing specialist saw the group return to the black. But there was strong support for Telcel, with the price rising 30p to 227.1p after reporting losses of £9 million.

Shares of London Bridge Software made a solid debut on the big board after a placing by Henderson Crosswhite at 200p. The price opened at 259p and touched a high for the day of 278p before closing at 261.1p, a premium of 61.1p.

KBC Advanced Technology got off to a brisk start in first-time trading after a placing in 1996. The price opened at 243.1p before closing at its best of the day with a rise of 52.1p at 277.1p.

Over on AIM, Total Office Group made a confident start with the shares opening at 152.1p compared with the placing price of 145p. After dipping to 150.1p, the price recovered to close at 152.1p, a premium of 7.1p.

The sale of its banana interest helped Geest, headed by Ian Menzies-Gow, chairman, and Mark Pullen, finance director, to boost profits last year by 73 per cent to £17.3 million. Action to stem losses in other parts of the business have also proved successful and now the group is expanding into other areas of the food market. The share ended 2.1p at 252.1p.

GILT-EDGED: Gilts followed US Treasury bonds and German bunds lower. The drop in inflation in February and the latest money supply figures had little impact.

The June series of the long gilt finished 5.1p lower at £108.16 as a total of 82,000 contracts were completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 closed 5.1p lower at £102.14, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was 5.1p off at £102.13.

NEW YORK: Technology shares rebounded even as the fear of an impending increase in interest rates sent the Dow Jones industrial average lower. By midday it was down 48.34 points at 6,829.34.

## MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):  
Dow Jones 6829.34 (-48.34)  
S&P Composite 781.85 (-3.92)

Tokyo:  
Nikkei Average Closed  
Hang Seng 12472.33 (-179.09)

Amsterdam:  
EEX Index 710.31 (-24.73)  
Sydney:  
AO 2391.3 (+6.11)

Frankfurt:  
DAX 3264.67 (-51.26)  
Singapore:  
Straits 2095.43 (-25.13)

Brussels:  
General 11563.93 (-255.27)  
Paris:  
CAC-40 2533.72 (-41.05)

Zurich:  
SIX Gen 932.50 (-16.20)  
London:  
FT 100 2833.4 (-35.8)

FTSE Mid 250 4505.2 (-67.7)  
FTSE 250 2105.7 (-37.4)  
FTSE Eurotrack 100 2121.04 (-19.99)

FT All-Share 2079.88 (-35.55)  
FTSE Financials 2147.26 (-25.73)  
FT FTSE 100 2147.26 (-25.73)

FT Govt Secs 92.88 (-0.19)  
BSE SENSEX 167.71  
LSE 1594.0 (-0.0028)

German Mark 2.8886 (-0.0036)  
Exchange Index 96.3 (same)  
Bank of England official rate (40p)  
ECU 1.7562

ESD 1.1572  
RPI 155.0 Feb (2.7%) Jan 1997/100  
RPIX 154.5 Feb (2.9%) Jan 1997/100

RECENT ISSUES  
Aortech 130p ...  
Aurora Inv Trust 100 ...

Birmingham City 15 ...  
Cambridge Mini Res 14 ...  
Centrica (75p) 50p ...

Core Group 301 ...  
Debenhams 260 ...  
Donatantonio 71p ...

Energy Group (52p) 46p ...  
Glenview Csh Sys 188p ...  
Howle 31 ...

KBC Advanced 247p ...  
London Bridge Sthw 261p ...  
M & G High Capital 9 ...

M & G High Income 68p ...  
M & G High Polg 102 ...  
M & G High Unit 80 ...

North Anglo Educn 143p ...  
Pad Group 262p ...  
River & Merc 1st UK 99p ...

Screen 5p ...  
Technoplast 97p ...  
Total Office Grp 152p ...

Usher of Trowbridge 120p ...  
VPG 41p ...  
RIGHTS ISSUES  
Grantham n/p (137) 36p ...

FTS n/p (100) 1p ...  
Patco n/p (300) 12p ...  
MAJOR CHANGES  
RISSE:  
Guinness 501p (+15p) ...

Sebe 1042p (+27p) ...  
PizzaExpress 710p (+32p) ...  
Rascal Bldg 297p (+12p) ...

Ocean Gp 520p (+30p) ...  
Telcel 227p (+30p) ...  
FALLS:  
Bank Sotl 315p (-24p) ...

Comm Union 641p (-15p) ...  
GRE 277p (-15p) ...  
Legal & Gen 385p (-21p) ...

Lloyds TSB 478p (-22p) ...  
Cable & Wireless 486p (-20p) ...  
BAT Ind 489p (-18p) ...

Pu Corp 552p (-17p) ...  
P&O Dtd 830p (-28p) ...  
Closing Prices Page 38

## TEMPUS

# Ocean catches the tide

OCEAN GROUP just had to sit back and wait. The frenetic pace of activity offshore in the Gulf of Mexico has created a shortage of rigs, barges and tenders, all to the benefit of oil service companies. OIL has 100 vessels, none in Tidewater's home patch in the Gulf of Mexico but the ships can be moved and the American buyer of OIL will be keen to get a foothold in West Africa. OIL has a big outpost on Bonny Island in Nigeria, convenient given the intense interest by the oil majors in the deepwater oil prospects off the Nigerian coast: likewise, OIL's presence in Brazil.

Ocean could have held out for more, but why bother? Assuming OIL's 1997 profits reach £24 million, the forward exit multiple is 19 times, an attractive price for a cyclical business which will need to spend heavily on ships just in time for the downturn.

The problem is how to invest the proceeds. Ocean wants to expand its international logistics business, MSAS. This is a far cry from the trucking and warehousing operations run by Salvesen or NCC. MSAS is an airfreight business that does not own a single plane, servicing high volume manufacturers such as Compag, Intel, Kodak and Sony which need just-in-time delivery throughout the world. Margins are thin but Ocean has managed to raise its return on sales by a point to 3 per cent and hopes to attain the 4 per cent earned by US competitors. It will get there through efficiency, consolidating freight and getting better prices from airlines. Small acquisitions will help to add scale to MSAS, but this business does not need capital and Ocean will need to find other reasons to hold on to all its cash.

## Nat Express

NATIONAL EXPRESS has been hit by some of the mud thrown at Stagecoach, its rowdy cousin and the pantomime villain of the sector. The fiasco at South West Trains shows what can happen to companies who get it wrong but National Express, by far the biggest of the train operators, should not be prejudged.

Firstly, Stagecoach runs one mainland franchise, to National Express' five. Secondly, while Stagecoach has run around in its attempt to cut costs, National Express has succeeded in axing some 20 per cent of staff from its rail franchises with barely a whisper from the unions.

The two companies have different strategies. National Express is looking for revenue growth and winning people away from the car, where

## Guinness

GUINNESS is so intimately linked with the ubiquitous stout that the company struggles to transfer the strength of its brand name to other beers. Valiant attempts have been made to expand, but the likes of Harp and Enigma, have barely succeeded in the UK market, let alone worldwide.

There are signs that the company has found a winner in Kilkenny, the cold-flow bitter. Languishing in pubs for almost ten years, the success of Bass's Caffreys has created a market for Irish bitter, and one that Guinness has quickly been able to exploit. Bass chose to sell Caffreys as an Irish Ale, allowing Guinness - which boasts a near monopoly on Irishness - an easy entry into the new market.

The success of Kilkenny allowed Tony Greener, chairman of Guinness, to sound positive yesterday. With spiralling markets picking up

around the world and the core Guinness beer products expanding quickly in new regions, Guinness finally seems to be in growth mode again.

Currency problems will restrict the increase in headline profits to a mere 2 per cent this year, although another share buyback could flatter the numbers. Guinness stands on an undemanding forward price earnings multiple of around 14 times, but it may be another year before the shares pick up steam.

WHAT is to be done with APV? Years of restructuring have left the company smaller but still struggling with pitiful margins. A business upturn in October has been reversed with a 15 per cent fall in the order book in January and February. A Russian order could send it back up again but the buyer is still arranging funds.

APV's problem is that it sells its equipment to big, international food manufacturers like Unilever. In cost-cutting mode themselves, they can dictate prices. Resistance is futile because the buyer merely shifts the order to APV's competitors, GEA or Alfa-Laval. Logic suggests that consolidation is needed, but competition issues could be tricky and each party wants to be strong enough to lead any merger.

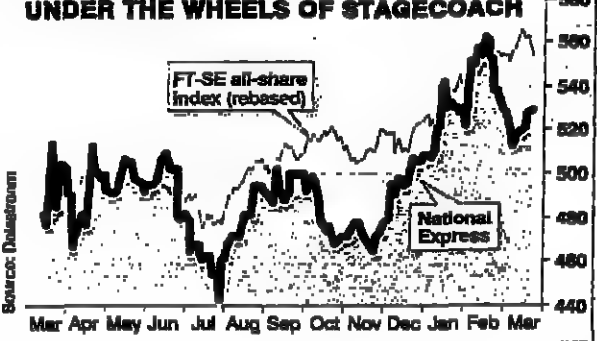
So the cost-cutting continues. APV should save another £11 million in the current year as the remaining restructuring provision is expensed. That boosted the shares, as did a pension credit of £8 million. A smaller workforce means that APV gets a pension holiday which should continue well into the next century.

A cynical stock market likes these little flips, but APV needs growth in sales, not a windfall from redundancies.

APV's problem is that it

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED

## NATIONAL EXPRESS: UNDER THE WHEELS OF STAGECOACH



## COMMODITIES

LIFEE  
Mar 102.812 May 107.1072  
Mar 102.812 May 107.1072  
Mar 102.812 May 107.1072

ROBUSTA COFFEE \$/lb  
Mar 104.1650 Jun 103.1630  
Mar 104.1650 Jun 103.1630  
Mar 104.1650 Jun 103.1630

WHITE SUGAR (FOB)  
Mar 307.0000 Jun 303.0000  
Mar 307.0000 Jun 303.0000  
Mar 307.0000 Jun 303.0000

MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION  
Average market prices at representative locations on March 20  
Cattle 146.11 96.62  
Sheep 146.11 96.62  
Pigs 146.11 96.62

ICEBERG (London 600000)  
CRUDE OILS \$/barrel FOB  
Mar 19.60 -0.10  
Mar 19.60 -0.10  
Mar 19.60 -0.10

SPICE CFW NEW (Grand delivery)  
Premium Union 21.35 21.35  
Cassia 177.42 178.42  
Zingiber 177.42 178.42

IFE FUTURES (GNI Ltd)  
GAS OIL  
Apr 172.00-72.25 Jun 176.25-76.50  
Apr 172.00-72.25 Jun 176.25-76.50

BRENT \$/barrel  
Mar 20.37-20.39 Apr 20.37-20.39  
Mar 20.37-20.39 Apr 20.37-20.39  
Mar 20.37-20.39 Apr 20.37-20.39

OFFICIAL (Volume prev day)  
Copper Cable (A) Volume prev day  
Copper Cable (A) Volume prev day  
Copper Cable (A) Volume prev day

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE  
Cable 2310.2310.2310  
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LIFE OPTIONS  
Call Series Apr Jul Oct Apr Jul Oct  
Put Series Apr Jul Oct Apr Jul Oct  
Call Series Apr Jul Oct Apr Jul Oct

FTSE INDEX 4289  
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## LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

Long Gilt  
Previous open interest: 200416  
Mar 97 109.20 109.14 109.17 109.15 1344

German Govt Bond (Bund)  
Previous open interest: 23626  
Mar 97 90.70 90.60 90.52 90.47 21960

Italian Govt Bond (BTP)  
Previous open interest: 10348  
Mar 97 124.50 124.54 124.38 124.11 66546

Japanese Govt Bond (JGB)  
Mar 97 125.90 125.97 125.81 125.91 12630

Three Mth Sterling  
Mar 97 92.34 92.34 92.34 92.31 40510

Three Mth Eurodollar  
Previous open interest: 113116  
Mar 97 92.75 92.75 92.75 92.75 33532

Three Mth Eurodollar  
Previous open interest: 36480  
Mar 97 92.75 92.75 92.75 92.75 20492

Three Mth Eurodollar  
Previous open interest: 90341  
Mar 97 92.75 92.75 92.75 92.75 8290

Three Mth Eurodollar  
Previous open interest: 90341  
Mar 97 92.75 92.75 92.75 92.75 8290

FTSE 100  
Previous open interest: 76822  
Mar 97 4327.0 4327.0 4327.0 4327.0 24774

Base Rates: Clearing Banks 6 Finance Hse 6%  
Discount Market: 0.10% high 5%  
Treasury Bills (Dec-Buy): 2 mth 5% 3 mth 5% 6 mth 5% 12 mth 5%

Prime Bank Bills (Dec-Buy): 2 mth 5% 3 mth 5% 6 mth 5% 12 mth 5%  
Overnight: 0.10% high 5%  
Interbank: open 5% close 5%

Local Authority Deposits  
Sterling CDs  
Dollar CDs  
Building Society CDs

## DOLLAR RATES

Australia 1.2675-1.2683  
Canada 1.1851-1.1856  
France 1.3760-1.3768

Germany 1.3760-1.3768  
Hong Kong 7.7460-7.7470  
Italy 1.0675-1.0678

Japan 123.00-123.05  
Malaysia 2.4738-2.4748  
Netherlands 1.6090-1.6097

Norway 6.7515-6.7575  
Portugal 196.61-196.71  
Singapore 1.4401-1.4407

Spain 143.00-143.10  
Sweden 7.4615-7.4640  
Switzerland 1.4423-1.4432

OTHER STERLING  
Argentina peso 1.505-1.507  
Australia dollar 2.0218-2.0244  
Bahraini dinar 4.7672-4.7677

Brazil real 1.8687-1.8691  
Chinese yuan 13.125-13.125  
Czech koruna 16.000-16.000

Denmark krone 6.46-6.46  
Euro 1.00-1.00  
Finland markka 5.00-5.00

French franc 6.55-6.55  
Greek drachma 202.18-202.18  
Hong Kong dollar 7.75-7.75

Indian rupee 46.35-46.35  
Indonesian rupiah 1,575.00-1,575.00  
Israeli sheqel 1.80-1.80

Japanese yen 106.00-106.00  
Korean won 1,000-1,000  
Malaysian ringgit 2.34-2.34

Maltese lira 4.36-4.36  
Mexican peso 16.67-16.67  
New Zealand dollar 1.60-1.60

Norwegian krone 6.46-6.46  
Pakistani rupee 130.00-130.00  
Peruvian sol 3.40-3.40

## WALL STREET

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THE TIMES  
CITY DIARY  
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# Laing gives warning on Labour's windfall tax

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

ONE OF Britain's largest construction groups yesterday issued a warning that Labour's proposed windfall tax could stifle recovery in the building trade, should the party come to power.

The attack by John Laing is one of the first to be made on Labour's key tax-raising plan from a business outside the utilities. Sir Martin Laing, chairman, said that it was important that the sustained growth being seen in construction should not be "stifled by a hiatus in government decision-making after the election or by policies that could adversely affect the capital expenditure programmes of the utilities sector."

A company spokesman said that a one-year hit on spending could have a worse impact than the recent recession.

Utilities companies are some of the biggest spenders on construction and John Laing is concerned that they would shelve large projects if forced to pay a windfall tax expected to raise £3 billion.

With Labour sources indicating an ever widening net of companies that could be affected by the tax, concern is expected to deepen in the construction industry.

Sir Martin said: "The utilities sector is one of the drivers of growth in the construction sector and it is important that policy changes do not adversely

ly affect the capital expenditure programmes of clients." The company's research estimates that the broad range of utilities, including rail, telecoms and airports along with the water, electricity and gas companies, spend £10 billion a year on capital projects. Although not all of that is spent on new building, it compares with the annual £28 billion spent on new building across all areas of the construction sector.

James Armstrong, finance director, said he expected leading contractors' groups to lobby Labour over its windfall plans. Although he did not expect a change of heart, groups may lobby for regulatory relaxations so utilities still have spending power.

Last year, John Laing lifted pre-tax profits 21 per cent to £24.5 million. Sales edged 4 per cent higher in the year to December 31 to £1.25 billion.

The company believes there will be a return to growth in construction of 2 per cent this year, after a fall of 10 per cent over the past six years. The company's order book is 21 per cent up on the year, it added, while the property market was strengthening, with retail at the forefront of the growth.

The dividend, which has been pegged at 8p for four years, was raised to 9.5p for the year. The final payment, due on July 4, was set at 0.5p.



David Kent, left, of SIG AP, and Graham Dewhurst, director at NatWest Ventures

## Managers buy SIG outlet

By PAUL DURMAN

SIG, the building materials group, has sold its architectural hardware arm to a management buyout team backed by £82 million of funding arranged by NatWest Ventures, SIG AP, headed by David Kent, chief executive, designs and distributes hardware for

windows and doors. Last year the business had sales of £67.2 million, and lifted operating profits to £7.1 million.

NatWest Ventures has made an equity investment of £33 million. NatWest Markets and Midland Bank have provided £39 million of senior debt. A further £10 million of mezzanine finance was pro-

vided by ABN Amro Causeway Mezzanine and Milthras Investment Trust.

Graham Dewhurst, director at NatWest Ventures, said: "Forecast for the housing market and the domestic economy over the next three years are positive. This is an excellent time for us to invest in SIG AP."

## Ibstock hit by shake-up and low prices

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

A SLUMP in pulp prices and restructuring costs sliced into the pre-tax profits of Ibstock, the brick manufacturer that also runs woodpulp mill and forestry operations in Portugal.

Ibstock, which became one of the UK's top two brick manufacturers when it bought Redland's bricks business last year, reported a fall in 1996 pre-tax profits to £52.2 million from £26.1 million.

The forestry products division, whose earnings are largely determined by pulp prices, incurred a £1.9 million loss compared with a £12.1 million profit in 1995. In addition, there were restructuring costs of £3.9 million for Ibstock's UK brick operations.

The Leicestershire company predicted that pulp prices would continue to be weak during the first half of this year.

After integrating Redland Brick, Ibstock said it was able to achieve annual cost savings of £8 million. Sir Colin Hope, chairman, said he expected the slow improvement in UK construction activity to continue through the year.

Last year, however, the brick market was shaped by poor prices, although a pickup was delivered by an increase in housebuilding in the second half.

Ibstock described this year as one of consolidation and operating focus after the company's transition in 1996. The purchase of Redland Brick last year gave Ibstock a 31 per cent share of the market, putting it on a par with Hanson Brick. Ibstock had been forced to sell factories producing 4 per cent of the market demand after it bought Redland by Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, in order that the deal should avoid a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

There is a final dividend of 1.25p a share, due on July 1, leaving the total unchanged at 2p.

## BUSINESS ROUNDUP

### Abbott Mead Vickers soars to a record

ABBOTT MEAD VICKERS, the advertising agency, reported record year-end results but said its growth had ported to do with the recovery from the recession. Peter Mead, who replaced David Abbott as chairman in January, said the results, showing pre-tax profits 39 per cent ahead of £14.5 million, were thanks to acquisitions, not the economic upturn. The new businesses generated £34.7 million in sales last year, bringing overall sales to £388 million (£287 million). It won £145 million of new business over the year, including accounts from BT, Prudential and Garwick Express. It was also responsible for the relaunch of Pepsi, which turned its cans blue last Easter. This created business for one of its PR divisions, which painted Concorde blue. Its marketing division delivered a strong performance, making more than 50 per cent of operating profits for the first time. Overall, earnings rose to 24.1p from 18.9p a share. A final dividend of 7.75p, due on June 16, brings the total to 11p.

### Burford rises to £15m

BURFORD HOLDINGS, the innovative property group that has spawned no fewer than three merged companies in Tracadero, Grantchester and Columbus, yesterday reported a rise in 1996 pre-tax profits to £15.06 million, from £11.16 million. Net asset value, including the free Grantchester and Columbus shares distributed to shareholders, rose 21 per cent, to 122.9p a share. Earnings from continuing operations rose 7 per cent, to 2.94p a share. There is a final dividend of 1.15p a share, making a total of 2.1p, up 11 per cent.

### Barclays in buyback

BARCLAYS BANK yesterday announced that it had completed the first part of its share repurchase programme by buying 3.9 million shares at a price of 1090.2p a share. Since unveiling a 13 per cent increase in annual pre-tax profits to £2.4 billion on February 26, Barclays has repurchased 20 million ordinary shares at an average price of 1112.55p, paying a total of £290 million. Martin Taylor, chief executive of the bank, has said up to £300 million will be returned to shareholders during the next 12 months.

### Sterling slows McBride

THE STRENGTH of sterling hit first-half sales growth at McBride, Europe's largest manufacturer of own-label household products and toiletries, the company revealed yesterday. Translated into sterling, sales were flat in the six months to December 31. At constant exchange rates, sales of core products were up 5.4 per cent. Pre-tax profit was £13.2 million (£8 million). Earnings per share were 5.7p (3.7p) and the interim dividend, payable on May 19, is 2.35p (2.25p).

### PowerGen buyout

POWERGEN, the second biggest generator, has bought out its joint partner in Kinetica, the gas retailer. In an £18 million deal PowerGen takes full ownership of the business from Conoco and will take on liabilities for expensive take or pay contracts up to £69 million. The liabilities for the contracts will be split equally between PowerGen and Conoco. Kinetica is one of the largest independent gas retailers with about 10 per cent of the industrial and commercial market.

### Steel Burrill down 61%

PRE-TAX profit at Steel Burrill Jones, the insurance broker, fell 61 per cent to £2.2 million (£5.7 million) in 1996, the company announced yesterday. It said conditions would continue to be "hostile" this year. Turnover at the retail arm was an improved £21.1 million (£19.6 million), but brokerage and fees in the London market slipped to £18.8 million (£23.3 million). A proposed final dividend of 0.75p will be paid on May 22, making a total of 1.5p (4.5p).

### Microvitec declines

MICROVITEC, the international technology group with operations in Britain, Germany and North America, suffered a decline in pre-tax profits to £460,000 (£3.41 million). Although sales rose to £65.2 million (£55.1 million), profits were adversely affected by a reduction in prices of many components. The strong pound also hit export markets. Earnings were 0.21p a share (3.14p). The final dividend is held at 0.45p a share, making a total of 0.875p (0.85p).

### Carclo pays £25.6m

CARCLO ENGINEERING is paying £25.6 million for the technical mouldings division of EIS Group, which is concentrating on making equipment for the oil, gas and aerospace industries. The technical mouldings business, founded around Davall Moulded Gears and Silfick Mouldings, serves the automotive, electronics and office automation markets. It expects to report a £3 million operating profit on sales of £37 million.

### Therapeutic spending

THERAPEUTIC ANTIBODIES, the drug development company whose shares have fallen by a quarter since its flotation in London last July, spent \$9.7 million on research and development last year, 50 per cent more than in 1995. Revenues increased 26 per cent to \$744,000, while net losses deepened to \$12.75 million (\$9.1 million loss). The company, based in Nashville, finished the year with \$22.5 million in cash and short-term investments.

### Keller shows strength

PRE-TAX profits at Keller Group, the international ground engineering company, rose to £12.5 million (£11.2 million), with a strong second-half performance offsetting the adverse impact of severe weather in Europe in the first half. Turnover was 7 per cent higher at £235 million. Activity in Germany has slowed but there is continuing growth in North America. The 3.9p final lift the total 10 per cent to 5.85p, payable from earnings that rose 19 per cent to 13.9p a share.

## More jobs under threat in Rugby revamp

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

MORE jobs may be lost at Rugby Group, the cement, masonry, joinery and building materials business, as the company completes a restructuring aimed at cutting costs and boosting margins.

The reshaping of the group, which includes large opera-

tions in the United States and Australia as well as the UK, began last year but has further to go, according to Peter Johnson, chief executive. A reduction in jobs had already been anticipated after Rugby bought Boulton & Paul, the low-making windows and doors manufacturer, last month. Then it was predicted

that up to 800 of the combined workforce of John Carr, Rugby's existing business, and Boulton & Paul might go.

Rugby saw pre-tax profits, before exceptional, fall 14 per cent to £62.5 million last year. After exceptional, the figures rose 15 per cent to £52.6 million (£45.8 million). John Carr suffered from

overcapacity in the sector and operating profits, before exceptional, fell 35 per cent on sales 2 per cent lower. Australia also proved a difficult market, given the country's sharpest downturn in housing for more than 20 years.

Operating profit fell 32 per cent on sales that were 8 per cent lower. The final dividend, payable on May 30, was held at 2.1p, for an unchanged total of 3.0p.

Rugby was cautious in its predictions for markets this year while issuing a warning that the strength of sterling would affect profits and that the long election campaign would create uncertainty in the UK economy.

## EXCLUSIVE OFFER AND COMPETITION THE TIMES

### Five kilim stools worth £400 each to be won

Times readers have the chance to win a beautiful kilim stool from Clock House Furniture. The kilims are hand woven in Turkey in a range of traditional colours and designs. Worth £400 each, they can be mounted on a wide choice of leg styles from mahogany finish Queen Ann to modern shapes stained to suit your decor. Clock House Furniture recognised a gap in the market seven years ago and is now making stools to order in any fabric, kilim or needlepoint, including Ottomans, window seats and club fenders. For a brochure call Nicholas Parry on 01620 861300.



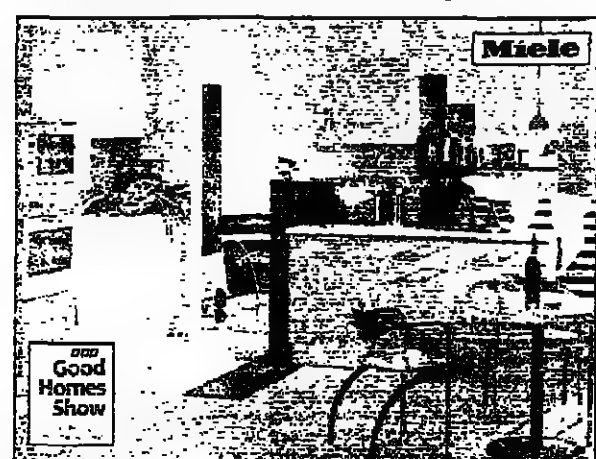
#### HOW TO ENTER

Phone our hotline 0839 444 546 with your answer to: Where are Clock House kilim stools hand woven? a) Afghanistan b) India c) Turkey

### FREE tickets for the BBC Good Homes Show

Plus a £10,000 Miele fitted kitchen to be won

The Times offers you a FREE ticket, worth at least £7.50, for the first ever BBC Good Homes Show at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, from



The line is open until midnight tonight. Winners will be chosen at random from all correct entries. Normal TNL rules apply. 0839 calls cost 50p per minute. See tomorrow's Times for a luxury shower.

April 9-13. Collect three differently numbered tokens and send them, with a stamped sae marked on the front with which day you wish to attend and the application form which will appear again tomorrow. Your name will automatically be entered into a prize draw to win the £10,000 Miele kitchen, left.

Throughout the week there will be live performances in the Lloyds Bank Insurance Direct Celebrity Theatre featuring celebrities from BBC shows. Lady Caroline Wrey will teach you how to dress a window as well as make blinds and accessories, Jocasta Innes who was featured in yesterday's competition, will give away her Paint Magic secrets, and Ann Morris, America's "House Doctor" reveals the secret of selling a home. Call 0121 767 4000 to pre-book theatre and show admission tickets. (For a Miele brochure call 01235 554488.)

THE TIMES  
THE BBC  
GOOD HOMES  
SHOW  
TOKEN 5

CHANGING TIMES

## Tottenham profits dented by transfer market spending

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

ALAN SUGAR, chairman of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, admitted yesterday that the club has had a disappointing season, but claimed that it is close to having a squad capable of challenging for major honours.

Operating costs at the club rose 13 per cent to £10 million because of an increase in the playing staff. The company added that it has renegotiated a number of the players' contracts to ensure protection against the Bosman ruling and that the full impact of this increase in costs would be felt in future years.

Tottenham announced a 13 per cent rise in half-year operating profits to £7.1 million, while overall turnover also rose 13 per cent to £71.1 million.

The club spent £10.8 million in the first half of the year on new players, including Allan Nielsen and Ramon Vega. Headline profits before tax fell from £10.7 million to £6 million as a result of the transfer market expenditure. The club also made a £2.6 million write-down on the squad's balance sheet valuation to take account of the Bosman ruling.

The company has completed the redevelopment of the South Stand, allowing corporate hospitality for up to 2,500 guests per match. Redevelopment of the North Stand will begin during the summer, which will result in a cut in capacity in the first part of next year. Two new team kits will also be launched next season.



Sugar: disappointing season

The interim dividend was increased 10 per cent to 0.33p, payable on April 28. Shares in the company closed 1/2p down at 110 1/2p.

## Chemicals group lifts profit to £62.5m in difficult environment

By MARTIN BARROW

ALBRIGHT & WILSON, the UK speciality chemicals company, is targeting emerging markets in Latin America, China and India for future expansion.

Expansion into geographic areas offering higher growth rates is already under way with investments in Mexico and in joint ventures in the Asia Pacific region. Robin Paul, chief executive, said: "It is to these markets the growth in revenues from new and existing products."

The company said it had also made progress in its efforts to enhance competitiveness in traditional areas of operation, although the financial benefit was likely to

be masked by the adverse impact of the stronger pound in 1997.

Mr Paul said: "The immediate challenge for management is to seek ways to mitigate the impact of the currency effect to ensure cost and price competitiveness is maintained in the UK business."

Yesterday Albright & Wilson reported a rise in pre-tax profits to £62.5 million from £55 million, which the company said was "a satisfactory result in an environment that has offered little assistance in the various markets in which the group operates". The price of raw materials stabilised, having added £40 million to costs in 1995.

Earnings were 13.9p a share (12.3p). The total dividend is 6.9p a share (6.5p).

with a 4.65p final. The shares rose 2 1/2p to 147p yesterday, although they remain well below the high of 207 1/2p achieved in 1996. The company was floated on the stock market in 1995 after 17 years as part of Tenneco Inc, the US industrial group.

In the key phosphates business, which supplies products from soft drinks to washing powders, sales rose 8 per cent to £361 million, including associate companies, but operating profits fell 7.5 per cent to £47 million, with margins down to 13 per cent (15.2 per cent). Mr Paul said phosphates had been affected by special phosporus prices and costs and distortions linked to capacity increases and plant refurbishments in England and Mexico.



# Heavy selling of second liners

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES</b>							
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104
105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105
106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106
107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107
108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108
109	109	109	109	109	109	109	109
110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
111	111	111	111	111	111	111	111
112	112	112	112	112	112	112	112
113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
115	115	115	115	115	115	115	115
116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
117	117	117	117	117	117	117	117
118	118	118	118	118	118	118	118
119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119
120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>BANKS</b>							
121	121	121	121	121	121	121	121
122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122
123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123
124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124
125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125
126	126	126	126	126	126	126	126
127	127	127	127	127	127	127	127
128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
129	129	129	129	129	129	129	129
130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130
131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131
132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132
133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
134	134	134	134	134	134	134	134
135	135	135	135	135	135	135	135
136	136	136	136	136	136	136	136
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138	138	138	138	138	138	138	138
139	139	139	139	139	139	139	139
140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>BREWERIES, PUBS &amp; REST</b>							
141	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144
145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145
146	146	146	146	146	146	146	146
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1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>BUILDING &amp; CONSTRUCT</b>							
161	161	161	161	161	161	161	161
162	162	162	162	162	162	162	162
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174	174	174	174	174	174	174	174
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176	176	176	176	176	176	176	176
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179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179
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1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>BUILDING MATERIALS</b>							
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187	187	187	187	187	187	187	187
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1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>CHEMICALS</b>							
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213	213	213	213	213	213	213	213
214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214
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219	219	219	219	219	219	219	219
220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	P/E
<b>DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS</b>							
221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
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224	224	224	224	224	224	224	224
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228	228	228	228	228	228	228	228
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# Kwik-Fit up to speed in new era for investor relations



Iverson: changed

True to its rallying call — "You can't get quicker than a Kwik-Fit fitter" — the car repair company yesterday delivered both its results and annual report yesterday, only 20 days after its financial year end.

Shareholders of other companies can only look on with envy. In the middle of the current reporting season, more investors are complaining about the time it takes most companies, regardless of size and diversity of operations, to publish their accounts. Most are now reporting preliminary results for calendar 1996, with annual reports unlikely to be published for several more weeks.

Tom Farmer, founder and chief executive of Kwik-Fit, claims to have saved the company both time and money by splitting the hard-core figures and Kwik-Fit story into separate documents — one with pictures, the other without. Mr Farmer says: "The biggest problems in the past have been delays in printing, trying to

Morag Preston takes a look at the changing face of the annual report

incorporate financial information into a big glossy brochure. But do you really need that colour? It should come in the results themselves."

On the basis that the majority of the company's shareholders look only at the balance sheet, the chairman's statement and the operations review, he claims to have saved them the trauma of wading through pages of incomprehensible figures. By publishing its financial results and operations review separately, Kwik-Fit has taken 39 days off the time it took to publish last year's report. It also made considerable savings: last year's report cost around £5.50 per copy to produce, compared with today's financial review at £1.80 and operations review at £2.20.

"We're in a new world now," says Mr Farmer, who predicts that it won't be long

before the arrival of the quarterly report. "Because trading patterns are much more erratic, making it more difficult to forecast these days, if there should be a problem, this would be one way of removing uncertainty and surprises."

No stranger to surprises is NatWest. The banking group is under scrutiny from shareholders anxious to discover the origins of a £90 million black hole in the interest rate options trading department. Worse still, the "black hole discovery" landed only days before NatWest unveiled its annual results. Ironically, NatWest is at the forefront of the Plain English Campaign, crusading to make its documents not only pleasing to the eye but easier to understand.

"A lot of companies spend a lot of money sending out material to shareholders

without thinking about its effectiveness," says Peter Hammonds, NatWest's company secretary. The bank has saved itself money, he says, by fine-tuning communication links with its 120,000 shareholders.

Bardays Bank used its annual report, published this week, to propose the introduction of a new long term incentive plan for around 60 key BZW executives; this gives shareholders time to chew over the subject before the bank's annual meeting on April 22. The 165-page report also laid bare what its directors are paid.

Donald Butcher, president of the UK Shareholders Association, said: "So many companies still miss the overriding objective of an annual report: to answer why I should invest, why I should remain as an investor and what they have done to increase shareholder value? Companies

are remarkably slow to come clean on these key issues." Mr Butcher added: "Utility companies missed the opportunity during privatisation to identify with small shareholders as customers, and prevent some of the ill feeling."

In the retail sector, where shareholders are customers, the Body Shop tries to inject some humour into its annual report. After three decades of campaigning for social change, Anita Roddick wrote in the 1995 report under the heading "Chairman's wife's statement". Printed on recycled paper, the report has evolved dramatically to include more colour and off-diary company news since the beauty emporium came to the market in 1984.

Laura Ashley's annual report underwent a dramatic overhaul when Ann Iverson took the helm as chief executive. The Texan troubleshooter completely refashioned the 1996 annual report, bringing it to life with a bold floral cover and glossy photographs.

## Courtaulds profit depleted by costs of cutting its cloth

By Sarah Cunningham

RE-ORGANISATION at Courtaulds Textiles, which last week announced the closure of two factories in Nottingham, is ahead of plan but paying for it almost wiped out 1996 profits, the company revealed yesterday.

Pre-tax profits in the year to the end of December after exceptional items were £400,000 after exceptional charges. This compares with £36.5 million pre-tax profit in 1995.

Exceptional costs of £31.7 million were charged for 1996, covering cost reductions in existing businesses and shifting of manufacturing abroad. The decline in underlying

profit to £32.1 million was mainly a result of a fall in earnings in American lace and stretch fabrics. Operating profits in lingerie and hosiery fell £4 million owing to poor trading conditions in France.

Eight businesses have been sold since June, while the Nottingham closures will swell the number of jobs lost by 340. The closures will end Courtaulds's lace production in the UK.

Trading across the group was stronger in the second half of last year. But over the year as a whole, an underlying profit advance of 31 per cent in the UK was more than offset by the effects of tough market

conditions in the US and continental Europe, it said.

Sales to Marks & Spencer, its main customer, rose 8 per cent, to £306 million, and there was good margin recovery. Courtaulds is Marks & Spencer's leading supplier of lingerie, while also supplying the High Street retailer with casual wear and furnishings.

Colin Dyer, chief executive, said: "Our immediate objective is to build profit towards 1995 levels as the first important stage towards achieving our targeted 17 per cent return on average capital employed."

The operational goals for this year are to complete the reorganisation. Trading to date has continued in line with the second half of last year. Restructuring should result in annual cost savings of between £10 million and £13 million by 1998.

Earnings per share were 21.6p before exceptional items, compared with 29.2p a year ago. The company is maintaining its final dividend at 10.1p, giving a constant full-year payout of 15.3p. The final dividend is payable on May 16.

Colin Dyer replaced Noel Jervis as head of Courtaulds. Jervis's second biggest textiles company, last June, in September, he announced a restructuring of the business that he said would cost up to £35 million.

Yesterday, he said: "The company's decisive actions produced an improved result in the second half, with pre-exceptional profit before tax slightly ahead of that achieved in the previous year."

## Geest reveals £60m recipe for growth

By Sarah Cunningham

GEEST, the chilled food company, is planning to invest about £60 million on growth over two years.

The company, which sold its banana business at the beginning of last year, wants to make the most of consumer reliance on consumer foods "free from the distractions of the banana industry". Organic growth will be complemented by acquisitions, it said.

Geest invested £23 million last year and made a pre-tax profit of £17.3 million, compared with £10 million a

year earlier. The sale of its banana business led to an exceptional profit of £18.2 million. The company has already bought Vaco, a Belgian manufacturer of chilled ready meals, although it plans to proceed with caution on the Continent until it has assessed potential demand.

Earnings rose 16.2p (9.6p) a share before exceptional items. Geest will pay a final dividend of 4.7p (4.4p), on July 1, which gives a total 8.4p (8.1p). The final dividend is payable on July 1.



QMH executives Andrew Coppel, left, Andrew Le Poidevin and Michael Cairns now aim to improve margins

## QMH back in the black as net debt falls

By Alasdair Murray

QUEENS MOAT HOUSES, the debt-laden hotel group, returned to profit last year and predicted that it could boost margins significantly in 1997.

QMH yesterday reported full-year profits, excluding tax, of £4.6 million, compared with a loss of £2.5 million in 1995. Operating profit from continuing businesses rose 25 per cent to £55 million.

Net borrowings were reduced from £1 billion to £842 million after the sale of a number of properties last year. Debt has been reduced further since the year end with the sale of 25 hotels for £92 million. The company said it now has only one hotel on the market.

Profits from the UK hotels increased 11.7 per cent to £33.5 million. Like-for-like occupancy rates increased 2 percentage points to 71.2 per cent while average room rates increased 3.6 per cent to £48.02. QMH is aiming to develop its bar, restaurant and fitness concepts to improve profit margins.

In Germany operating profits quadrupled to £4.4 million after improved cost control. But occupancy rates were flat at 60.3 per cent while room rates fell slightly.

The Dutch hotels increased profits 23 per cent to £12.1 million, with rises in both occupancy levels and room rates. Improved cost control also helped the French hotel portfolio to break even, compared with a loss of £700,000 in 1995, although occupancy and rates declined again. The Belgian hotels slipped to an operating loss of £300,000 from a profit of £800,000 in the previous year.

QMH added that trading remained strong and rates and occupancy were improving. But the company said the rise of sterling and post-election interest rate rises could have a negative impact on profits.

## T&N buys Metal Leve for \$54m

T&N, the UK automotive components company, is acquiring Metal Leve Inc, an American manufacturer of articulated pistons for diesel engines used mainly in heavy duty trucks, for a total of \$54 million (Martin Barrow writes).

The company is paying \$46 million in cash and assuming debts of \$8 million.

Metal Leve has manufacturing facilities in South Carolina and a technical centre in Michigan. It is currently owned by Metal Leve SA, the Brazilian bearing and piston manufacturer, and employs about 350 people.

In 1996 the business reported profits of \$4.1 million before interest and tax on sales of \$63 million. The company's net assets are approximately \$33 million.

The acquisition is subject to approval by the Federal Trade Commission, which is expected by early May.

## Purchases help LAWS to Ir£6m

Good contributions from acquisitions and steady trade in all divisions boosted interim pre-tax profits at LAWS, the Irish agri-food company, by 27 per cent to Ir£6.1 million.

Sales in the six months to January 31 grew 10 per cent to Ir£270 million. The group owns the Shamrock Foods distribution network and has fertiliser, animal feed and fish protein operations in the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

Earnings per share increased 39 per cent to 3.89p. The company declared an interim dividend of 1.5p, payable on June 23, a rise of 10 per cent.

## Restaurant deal

Groupe Chez Gerard, the London restaurant group, has agreed to acquire Grill St Quentin and Brasserie St Quentin, two Knightsbridge restaurants, for £2 million. In 1996 the restaurants earned pre-tax profits of £400,000 on turnover of £2.6 million. Net assets were £600,000 at December 31.

## Gardens grow

Country Gardens, the garden centre group with 32 outlets in the South East, reported a rise in 1996 pre-tax profits to £2.27 million, from £1.20 million, on turnover that rose to £34.7 million (£23.5 million). Earnings were 10.7p a share (5p). The dividend is 1.60p (1.38p).

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CHANGING TIMES

## Irish Life shakes off US slump

FROM EILEEN McCABE IN DUBLIN

STRONG second-half sales of Irish Life's new range of savings and investment products in the Republic of Ireland helped to offset a sluggish performance in its US operations, the company said as it revealed a 3 per cent increase in annual pre-tax profits to Ir£153 million.

The Republic's largest insurance company said the new range boosted sales in Ireland by 32 per cent to Ir£36 million in the second half, giving an annual increase of 11 per cent. However, US sales fell 15 per cent over the year, largely because of the downturn in the fixed annuity market. Overall operating profit was up almost 9 per cent to Ir£93 million.

Irish Life is currently completing a Ir£100 million acquisition of Guarantee Reserve, an Illinois life insurance company, which will almost double its US operations.

The final dividend of 8.5p makes a total of 12.05p, up 9.5 per cent, payable on May 23.

## Suitors queuing up for Sulzer Medica flotation

SULZER, the Swiss engineering multinational, has been bombarded with propositions for takeovers, acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures since it announced that its medical division is to be quoted separately in New York and Switzerland.

Fritz Farhi, chief executive, said Sulzer had received about two approaches a week. The group will float a quarter of

Sulzer Medica, which makes heart pacemakers, hip joints and other surgical products. Its sales grew 11 per cent to Sfr1.6 billion (£800 million) in 1996, but profits were hit by net one-off charges of Sfr73 million.

Coupled with heavy restructuring costs, this cut the group's net profit by 11 per cent to Sfr82 million. It forecasts substantial improvement this year.



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## THEATRE 1

The faces change in Art, but the surprise West End hit of the year is as gripping as ever



## THEATRE 2

Brian Friel's latest play, *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, is unveiled in Dublin, but proves to be not quite vintage

## THE TIMES ARTS



## MUSIC

Roger Norrington brings his wit and verve to the LPO's Haydn festival, but the crowd stays away



## TOMORROW

Caryl Churchill's comic hit *Cloud Nine* is revived at the Old Vic read Benedict Nightingale's review

THEATRE: A subtle *Art* continues to impress; but Brian Friel's latest stylish offering loses something in production

# Friends in the frame

Art  
Wyndham's

It began as a play and is becoming a phenomenon. Who would have thought that as wise a comedy as Yasmina Reza's *Art* would pack out Wyndham's for five months and, after a major change of cast, not just be booking until next October but boasting a box-office advance of £250,000? The current wisdom is that, unless a piece has big stars, soaring helicopters or tunes by Lord Lloyd-Webber, it can enjoy only a modest success in the West End. It has taken the French-Iranian Reza to disprove this.

Recasting has taken some of the decisiveness out of Matthew Warchus's production, but it has added subtlety. Anton Lesser is less wintry than Tom Courtenay as Serge, the dermatologist who spends 200,000 francs on a painting that consists of a white rectangle with half-visible white streaks. David Haig is less hearty than Albert Finney as Marc, the aeronautical engineer who cannot hide his belief that his oldest chum has been diddled by the chic opportunists of the art market. The differences between the two are less inordinate, so it is more credible that they have been and still believe themselves close friends.

But the big change comes in Yvan, who regards both as his best friends and is regarded by both as wit. For a time, I thought Mark Williams a slightly disappointing substitute for Ken Stott, who brought astonishing bravura to what is already one of the modern theatre's great set pieces, a long paragon of self-pity in which Yvan evokes the emotional chaos of his impending marriage. But his slower, goofier approach pays off. At the end one realises, as one did not with Stott, that this woebegone pig-in-the-middle has been badly damaged by the fallout from a quarrel that, in its cool, Parisian way, has threatened to go nuclear.

Indeed, his performance

made it clear why Reza mumbled something mildly graceless about "thinking I had written a tragedy" when she received a best comedy award last year. At the time I thought she had failed to see that the English see good comedy as a more serious, textured business than they do on the Paris boulevards. But, hilarious though it often is, there is more insecurity, fear, unfulfilled need and unresolved pain in the play than I had realised.

That is the answer to the few critics who originally thought *Art* bland. It always was easier to refute those who found it philistine, especially when the view was expressed as inanely as it was by *The Guardian*'s Richard Gott. Writing from the moral high ground he has long inhabited, he declared that not since "the palmy days of the Third Reich" had people had their prejudices so pandered to than by this "old-style fascist theatre". That wrongly assumed that Reza sides with reactionary Marc. It totally ignored a touching, healing ending. It also misidentified the play's subject.

That subject is not cultural fashion or the vagaries of the art trade, but the nature and limitations of friendship. To what extent does caring for someone mean tolerating his taste, his opinions, his ego, his attempts to control you, his changing personality? To what degree must friendship involve evasion, compromise, humility, attempting to cover up emotional fissures when they show themselves? So deftly does Reza raise those and other issues that I am tempted to revise my view of her play. In October I called it a minor classic. Let's change that to classic comedy, period.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE



Mark Williams, David Haig and Anton Lesser as Yvan, Marc and Serge, supposed friends whose amity is unexpectedly tested by an abstract painting in Yasmina Reza's *Art*

## A question of literary value

WHEN an aristocrat of literature has delivered his work, which opinions really matter? The ones given by the readers who don't want his novels any more; that of the agent who fired him; or that of a world indifferent to his plight — an inability to finish a five-year-old novel, and his poverty and isolation in a Co Donegal hideaway? Or will the judgment of his worth come from somewhere else?

Tom Connolly (Tom Hickey), the writer at the centre of Brian Friel's *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, has his questions clear, but cannot decide where best to seek the answers. Ask Daisy, his wife, and you will get a sozzled rant about uncertainty. Ask Garrett, the popular novelist, and you will get the sky answers of a rival. Ask Bridget, the sedated daughter in the padded cell, and you'll get no answer at all.

On the sunny lawn at home.

Give Me Your Answer, Do! Abbey, Dublin

Daisy (Catherine Byrne) eases her way into the afternoon with a few gins, and slyly interrogates David Knight (Darragh Kelly), a scavenger of literary archives, snuffing his way through Tom's papers. Forty years of work stretch across the stage — works in which the public no longer has any interest.

As ever Friel's stylish patterning of his material is intense. Chekhov crops up early as the guests, Daisy's parents (Aideen O'Kelly and David Kelly), along with Garrett (Des McAleer) and his wife (Frances Tomelty), gather for one last hurrah of an ebbing Irish literary aristocracy. The crucial resonance is with Eliot's tempters in the

Cathedral, as the good Knight offers Tom that which is not his to give: the benevolent view of posterity.

If the story seems a little specific, the production is a greater problem. With the very notable exceptions of O'Kelly and David Kelly, the cast were all acting dangerously below par. Byrne had difficulty with dialogue that required close timing. Tom Hickey's mannered performance, too, had grave problems.

Friel's decision to direct has a whiff of hubris about it. A number of verbal skirmishes needed to be far tighter, while visual aspects are undeveloped. Perhaps this is not a Friel to stand alongside *Faith Healer*, *Translations* or *Dancing at Lughnasa*, but without a more precise production it could also look pale next to *Molly Sweeney*.

LUKE CLANCY

## On the road to a rage

RADIO

assess the role of writing in that decade.

Andy Martin, the presenter, sensibly took the position that one did not influence a decade by writing a book during it. The principal 1960s influences came from the previous decade, including the early work of Jack Kerouac and, of course, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, the novel which first defined the word "teenager".

Saul Bellow and Camille Paglia were among the programme's interviewees. Much as Bellow is interesting (and rarely heard these days), it was Paglia who would have

induced odd looks and defensive door-locking from fellow motorists as I listened to her in the car. She is one of those infuriating people who cannot define anything except in terms of its death.

According to Paglia, the 1960s brought the end of the novel as a significant instrument: "For me the last great moment in the novel was the moment of the Modernist novel — Joyce, Proust, Faulkner, Hemingway. After that I think the novel begins to die." And why was that? "History became too vivid from the Kennedy assassination onwards — events in the real world overtook the novel." This is a classic child-of-the-1960s view: two World Wars could not kill off the novel but one presidential assassination could.

I shouted at the in-car entertainment module (as we children of the 1960s call it) and headed for the nearest bookshop.

PETER BARNARD

## Romantic treatment of a brute

University College Opera's latest, an exhilarating film, yet another gap in our experience of nationalist operatic movements. *Drat og Marak* (1878), described as a "song drama" by its composer, Peter Heise (1830-79), is the most significant Danish romantic opera, and proved well worth investigating.

The subject matter, based on fact, has a familiar ring. King Erik V was assassinated in 1286 by his Marshal, Stig Andersen, whose wife he had seduced. According to Heise's librettist, Christian Richardt, he was in the habit of seducing more or less everything that moved, including the local church-burner's daughter, Aase. Add to this his boasting about his exploits as an arsonist, and you come to the opera's main drawback: the protagonist is such a frightful

bounder that you can't wait for someone to stick a knife in him. The work is not rich in dramatic conflict.

Heise's musical language is a touch conservative for its day: Beethoven and Weber are obvious influences — the latter especially on the instrumentation — and the harmonies are cheerfully diatonic, taking little note of what Wagner had been up to in the meantime. There are good tunes. In particular for Aase, and one or two scenes that can't fail: the Marshal's public denunciation of the King in council, and the subsequent conspirators' chorus. A sense of short-windedness in Heise's easily conversational word-setting style — good ideas peter out before they need to — may be

## OPERA

King and Marshal Bloomsbury

due to the cutting and rearranging made by the conductor, David Hammond, who also supplied the English translation. It's a pleasure to catch one who would be happy to catch on a weekend in Copenhagen, but not as trail-blazing as what was happening in Bohemia, Poland or Russia at that time.

Hammond conducted Monday's British premiere with proselytising zeal, and there was rude, undisciplined energy in Robert Chevara's production, with cast and chorus in bizarre pick-n-mix costumes.

The women get the best music and were the best singers: Helene Wold especially charming in Aase's song and Weberian prayer in the

last act, and Louise Cannon steadily rising to the dramatic soprano challenges of the Marshal's guilt-ridden wife. The lyric tenor Julian Jensen was mellifluous as the King's treacherous valet, but someone should whisper to Mark Evans (taking the role of the Marshal) that not every note in an opera needs to be sung double fortissimo. The King himself, baritone-turned-tenor James Hancock, sang with so erratic a sense of pitch as to have one guiltily longing for the denouement.

There are repeat performances tonight and tomorrow for rarity-hunters, but if you want to opera about a Scandinavian monarch being murdered by his girlfriend's husband, *Un ballo in maschera* is on the whole a safer bet.

RODNEY MILNES

## Haydn restored

CONCERT

LPO/Norrington Festival Hall

for a steady, sturdy Vivace opening movement, the first beat of its triple rhythm swinging into every bar. The famous urbane finale was, by contrast, feathery footed until the trumpets stepped up the already tightening harmonic tension, and a loud timpani roll gave its final triumphant growl.

Many a nudge and a wink accompanied the Symphony No 83 (*The Hen*) as it clucked and pecked its way forward after an opening of dark minor-key para-

graphs and sudden, shuddering silences. Norrington's long, continuous phrasing and steady pulse of repeated notes maintained extraordinary tension in the long but fleet Andante before a Menuet in which many a muddy double-bass boot was to be glimpsed under the twirling gowns of the upper strings.

Norrington's Haydn Festival is playing Haydn off not only against himself, but also against his great admirer, Benjamin Britten. Neil Jenkins replaced an indisposed John Mark Ainsley to sing the *Nocturne*, Britten's continuous, trance-like sequence of sleep and poetry. Jenkins is a fine interpreter of Britten, and he gave a lucid, fine-boned performance, missing only that elusive sensuality which lurks behind this strange midsummer night's dream. Norrington possibly miscalculated the balance here: the strings spun an over-fragile thread of allusion, though the seven orchestral soloists — bassoon, harp, horn, timpani, cor anglais, flute and clarinet — worked their own disturbing magic to constantly beguiling effect.

HILARY FINCH

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## March 23 (Apr)

● *ONCE* again, the celebrated farcure Ray Cooney is inviting Theatre Club members to sit in on his creative process. A rehearsed reading of *Up, Up, Up*, will be held before an audience, followed by a general discussion, while Cooney makes notes to help him with his re-writes. Tickets are £5, including a glass of wine or a soft drink in the interval. Tel 0171-369 1734

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## Apr 4, 11

● TWO tickets for the price of one (normally £11.50 to £12.75) for Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. Tel 01204 520601

## BASINGSTOKE

## Haymarket Theatre

## Apr 1-4

● ADRIAN HODGES, the writer of the television hit *Kingsley* QC, has written a comedy. It's called *Life Goes On*, and members can save £5 on tickets (normally £11 to £13.50). Tel 01256 465666

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● SAVE 20 per cent on tickets for Tues or Wed performances of the staged version of Graham Greene's *Travels with my Aunt* (normally £8.50 to £12.50). Tel 01722 320333







Lizz trumpeter  
Anton Marsalis  
writes *Blood On  
the Fields*, the  
new work of his  
career, to London

POP 3

California's Cake  
offer an appealing  
mix of the odd and  
the diverse on  
their latest album,  
*Fashion Nugget*...

POP 4

...but Lisa  
Stansfield, for  
all her seductive  
charm, merely  
treads water  
on her new album

THE TIMES POP  
ARTS

POP 5

They sound as if  
they come from  
somewhere hot, but  
Santa Cruz are  
actually the hottest  
thing in Bristol

POP 6

Hey, hey, we're  
the wrinklies:  
the reconstituted  
Monkees offer a  
dispiriting night  
at Wembley Arena

# The new buzz on the street is ... Cake

POP ALBUMS: David Sinclair unearths  
another American band in the Beck, Eels,  
kind of quirky and rather fab mould

CAKE

*Fashion Nugget*  
(Capricorn/Mercury 532 867  
£11.99)  
HOT on the heels of Beck and  
the Eels, Cake is the latest act to offer a  
welcome alternative to "alternative"  
American rock. Rejecting the  
stifling conformity that has beset  
that misnamed genre since grunge  
fizzled out, the five-piece group  
from Sacramento have adopted a  
more open-ended and offbeat ap-  
proach and been rewarded by  
seeing their second album, *Fashion  
Nugget*, continuing to hover just  
outside the American Top 50, six  
months after its release in that  
country.

Now it is our turn to savour the  
various ingredients which make  
Cake's musical recipe so appealingly  
different. While incorporating  
fashionable elements of hip hop  
and rap, à la the Red Hot Chili  
Peppers, they nevertheless apply a  
quaintly old-fashioned approach to  
their songwriting.

But their unique touch of genius  
is in integrating the sound of  
mariachi trumpeter Vince DiFiore.  
His flourishes lend a delightfully  
unexpected touch to numbers in-  
cluding the superb hit single, *The  
Distance*, and *Frank Sinatra*,  
where it sounds for a moment as if  
Herb Alpert has wandered into an  
Elvis Costello session.

Their choice of cover versions is  
similarly unpredictable: a forth-  
right reappraisal of the old Gloria  
Gaynor anthem, *I Will Survive*, and  
Willie Nelson's genty ironic *Sad  
Songs and Waltzes*. Meanwhile,  
an alert if somewhat warped sense  
of humour is threaded through the  
lyrics of their own numbers, rang-  
ing from the country-flavoured  
*She'll Come Back to Me* to the  
stream-of-consciousness funk of  
*Race Car Ya-Yas*.

Odd and diverse in both its  
influences and reach, *Fashion  
Nugget* is the kind of album you  
could ponder to the point of  
meaninglessness. Better simply to  
enjoy its cranky yet utterly modern  
charm for all it is worth.

Compact discs reviewed in  
*The Times* can be ordered  
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LISA STANSFIELD

*Lisa Stansfield*  
(Arista/BMG 74321458512 £14.49)  
STUNG, no doubt, by the compar-  
atively poor sales of her lacklustre  
1993 album, *So Natural*, and  
mindful of the subsequent rise of  
Brit-soul stars such as Gabrielle  
and Dina Carroll, Lisa Stansfield  
has taken great pains to ensure that  
her fourth album is up to scratch.  
Her long-time partner, Ian  
Devaney, this time shares the  
production credits with Peter  
Mokran, whose previous experi-  
ence with R. Kelly, Michael Jack-  
son, Toni Braxton and others  
ensures that the album is graced  
with an authentic-sounding Ameri-  
can R&B gloss. A selection of  
tightly scripted love/relationship  
songs, including a cover of Barry  
White's *Never Never Gonna Give  
You Up* and an ultra-commercial  
Diane Warren song, *I Cried My  
Last Tear Last Night*, is carefully  
tailored to Stansfield's sultry  
vocals. And there is the lucky, last-  
minute bonus of *People Hold On*  
(*Bootleg Mix*), a hit out of the blue  
for her at the start of the year. It is a  
seductive package that can hardly  
fail, but which offers nothing to  
broaden her range or to challenge  
the most obvious of expectations.

BEE GEES

*Still Waters*  
(Polydor 537 302 £13.99)  
THE magic of the Brit Awards was  
confirmed when the nation awoke  
last week to find two Bee Gees  
albums in the Top 10. *Still Waters*,  
which joins a greatest hits collec-  
tion in the chart, is the latest  
offering from the Gibb brothers  
who, having been laughably un-  
fashionable even at the height of  
their fame, are now impervious to  
the shifting sands of popular taste.  
Still singing of fevered emotions  
and tortured imaginings in falsetto  
tones that range from a quivering  
beside whisper to a noise resem-  
bling the alarmed bleating of  
sheep, they stamp their unmistak-  
able mark on numbers ranging  
from the slick *I Surrender* to the  
saccharine *I Will*. The new medal-  
ion man lyrics are excruciating —  
"I'm in love with the child inside,"  
they sing in *Obsessions* — but  
otherwise it is an album written  
and performed to the usual exact-  
ing, if hardly exciting, standards.



Cake — (from left) John McCrea, Todd Roper, Greg Brown, Vince DiFiore, Victor Damiani — the latest and very welcome alternative to "alternative" American rock

CHUCK PROPHET

*Homemade Blood*  
(Cooking Vinyl COOK 114 £14.99)  
WHILE new acts, such as Wilco,  
are rightly acclaimed as saviours  
of American roots music, it seems  
that Chuck Prophet, a no less  
talented performer with similarly  
traditional instincts, remains fore-  
ver burdened with the curse of bad  
timing.  
*Homemade Blood* is the fourth  
album of a solo career that has

proceeded in fits and starts since  
before the dissolution of Prophet's  
former band, Green On Red, in  
1991. A collection of lovingly  
crafted, rough-edged songs,  
steeped in an earthy cocktail of  
country, blues and Rolling Stone-  
ish rock'n'roll influences, it is a  
brilliant record of its kind that  
deserves far wider attention than  
its limited marketing budget and  
unfortunate title will enable it to  
receive.

Great tunes, such as the Dylan-  
esque title track, rub shoulders  
with soulful lyrics and adventurous  
but never over-the-top guitar solos,  
as on the scruffy *Oak Wae*, which  
canters to a mighty finale with the  
help of a striding riff borrowed  
from Jimi Hendrix's *Hey Joe*.  
An album surrounded by no  
great expectations or hype, *Home-  
made Blood* is primed instead by  
pure spirit and plenty of old-  
fashioned heart.

TOP TEN ALBUMS

1	(2)	Spice	Spice Girls (Virgin)
2	(5)	Still Waters	Bee Gees (Polydor)
3	(1)	Pop	U2 (Island)
4	(28)	Nine Lives	Aerosmith (Columbia)
5	(3)	Everything Must Go	Manic Street Preachers (Epic)
6	(4)	Ocean Drive	Lighthouse Family (Wild Card)
7	(11)	Tragic Kingdom	No Doubt (Interscope)
8	(7)	Very Best of...	Bee Gees (Polydor)
9	(6)	B-Sides, Seaside & Frerides	Ocean Colour Scene (MCA)
10	(12)	K...	Kula Shaker (Columbia)

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\* Figure in brackets denotes last week's position

## Look what Santa's got you for Easter

If you're from Bristol, and your songs are influenced  
by ghosts, then why not call yourselves Santa Cruz?

You imagine it would  
be desolate, this place  
where Santa Cruz  
learnt to shiver, coil and  
break. On hearing them for  
the first time, and knowing  
nothing about them, you  
figure they live in a shack in  
Spit Junction, Australia,  
playing plangent songs to  
uncomprehending locals in  
shabby bars. Or maybe  
they're from the wide, broil-  
ing Californian deserts. Four  
friends huddled around a  
radio, picking up John Peel  
on a long-wave radio, and  
drinking in crackly, static-  
ridden harmonies like water.  
But then, this rending  
emptiness could equally be  
down to living on the edge of  
a broken city, taking bus  
rides that take you past  
burnt-out shops and crum-  
bling churches, neglected  
neighbourhoods and waste-  
land parks. The scary parts  
of Boston: the high-rise parts  
of the West Coast where the  
Byrds' vocals still echo...

But no. All wrong. They're  
a skateboard shop assistant,  
a typesetter, a mental-health  
worker and a bank clerk  
from Bristol. They believe in  
being polite and being wast-  
ed, being deep and being  
pop, and they're rigorously  
self-educated in Being Hot  
But Playing It Cool.

Santa Cruz were five years  
in the planning; they knew  
the label and producer they  
wanted before they wrote a  
note, and their record collec-  
tion is the sum total of 20th-  
century pop genius — John  
Lee Hooker, My Bloody  
Valentine, Nick Drake, Sun  
Records' roster, the Beach  
Boys.

And, on top of all this,  
their debut single is the most  
self-assured declaration of  
intent since the week the  
Stone Roses a) did some-

thing, and b) it was good.  
*Thirty Degrees Below* is the  
sound of someone holding  
on to their sanity by a thread,  
all breaking harmonies,  
stick-the-kitchen-sink-in-  
chord changes and a desper-  
ate sense of claustrophobia.  
"Well, the place in which  
we write and rehearse is  
rather isolated," Michele  
Schiffa, the drummer, ex-  
plains. "Scott Haigh-Jerrold,  
the lead singer's, mum owns  
a pub on Spike Island: it's a



CAITLIN MORAN

patch of flat mud and grass  
in the middle of the Severn  
Estuary. Spike Island is the  
last place in Britain to carry  
out public executions — the  
executioner used to live in  
the basement of the pub. And  
there's a very odd vibe there.  
Sometimes, when it's still  
and quiet, you can hear  
someone moving around."  
"Yeah, the last time I  
stayed there," Peter Sullivan,  
the guitarist, says, "I was in  
bed and I could feel these  
claw-like hands moving all  
over my legs. I wasn't really  
scared, though. Whoever it  
was isn't real, just a bit lost."  
Loss seems to be a big  
thread running through  
their album, to be called *Way  
Out*, due for release later in  
the year but already shaping  
up to be one of those played-  
to-death summer albums.  
These uneasy melodies

sweetly straddle the blaze of  
summer sun and the damp  
musk of evening. Each grip  
at joy leaves Santa Cruz's  
hands bloodied and torn but,  
equally, every painful  
thought has the memory of  
happier times. Forever  
sounds like the Go-Betweens  
locked in a cage, being told of  
all the horror in the world by  
Tricky, whereas *Rocket  
Man* is an almost hippy ode  
to the joy of walking barefoot  
in summer, undercut by a  
guitar-line that squeals like  
one of John Squire's before  
dipping into doubt.

It's a mesmerising balanc-  
ing act, redolent of Crowded  
House's greatest moments  
and facilitated by the razor-  
sharp ache of Haigh-Jerrold's  
voice. The fact that he  
could be good-looking for  
England won't harm them a  
bit either.

So how does a band this  
disparate and desperate get  
together? Did they all hook  
up at Melancholists Anony-  
mous? Maybe messages in  
bottles that washed up at the  
feet of the right people? Or  
possibly a series of chance  
meetings in a local churchyard?

"No," Geoff Gorton (bass)  
says. "We were in a dodgy  
indie club in Bristol and I  
saw this lovely girl with  
glossy hair sitting on a  
barstool. As I was very  
drunk, I went over to intro-  
duce myself, and was rather  
shocked to find the glossy  
hair was attached to a fella.  
Scott. I was so surprised I  
asked him to join the band. It  
was happy coincidence."

Or rather, a happy-yet-  
knowing-that-all-happiness-  
is-transient-and-an-illusion  
coincidence.  
\*Thirty Degrees Below is re-  
leased by MCA Records on  
Monday

## CONCERTS: Band that never really was makes a comeback that isn't; change of formula is a hit

### Last train to nowhere

IN A decade which has wit-  
nessed such unlikely reunions  
as those of the Velvet Under-  
ground and the Sex Pistols,  
you can hardly blame the  
Monkees for getting back  
together again. Unlike those  
other acts, the Monkees have  
no artistic credibility or his-  
torical reputation to "betray".  
They were a made-up group in  
the first place, a pure, Satur-  
day tea-time entertainment  
phenomenon with a cultural  
significance roughly on a par  
with that of Sooty and Sweep.  
But that hardly excuses the  
many moments of scurrying  
embarrassment and intermit-  
tent stretches of boredom that  
were generated by much of  
this show. It started with a  
neat "magical" flourish as the  
four men appeared, seemingly  
out of thin air, in a shower of  
sparks. Dressed in blue  
crushed velvet suits, Davy  
Jones, 51, Michael Nesmith,

#### The Monkees Wembley Arena

Things started to go serious-  
ly awry when the session  
musicians were smuggled on  
and the individual members  
started doing their party  
pieces. Nesmith provided an  
achingly dull reading of his  
only solo hit, *Rio*, and Tork  
weighed in with a pub-rock

#### version of Lucille. Dolenz offered a numbingly dreadful rendition of the torch song *Since I Fell For You* before the diminutive Jones leapt in with a cabaret song-and-dance rou- tine that made Ernie Wise look like Fred Astaire.

The mood of desperately  
forced frivolity escalated  
throughout the second half of  
the set, which was intercut  
with clips from the new  
Monkees TV series, and it

became painfully apparent  
that gags and routines which  
might be carefree, ephemeral  
fun in the hands of a fresh-  
faced gang of youths quickly  
lapse into naïf self-parody  
when the participants are  
clearly of an age to know  
better.  
The perfunctory encores of  
*I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone*  
and *Pleasant Valley Sunday*  
partly redeemed the situation,  
but the real sadness was that,  
whatever the aesthetic consid-  
erations, the show as a whole  
had failed to entertain.

DAVID SINCLAIR

### South rises again

#### Texas Empire, W12


LAST autumn, anyone who  
predicted that Texas would  
have a chart-topping album  
early in 1997 would have been  
laughed at. The Glasgow rock  
outfit had been a hot ticket in  
1989, but their return to com-  
mercial favour seemed only  
slightly more likely than one  
by their contemporaries Then  
Jericó or Living In A Box.

The speedy renewal of their  
pop credentials has everything  
to do with powerful music and  
little to do with the whims of  
fashion, even if lead singer  
Shaheen Spiteri is now all  
over the style sheets. Pop is the  
key word, too, as Texas have  
moved from their traditional  
American rock habitat to a  
modern soul environment.  
Such a play produced instant  
results when *Say What You  
Want* became their biggest  
ever single in January, teeing  
up the Nu 1 album *White on  
Blonde*.

The comeback hit, delivered  
towards the end of an efficient  
but rarely inspiring London  
show, had new and original  
fans swaying and singing with  
its clever and cheeky appropri-  
ation of a hook from Marvin  
Gaye's *Sexual Healing*. One

of its partners on the new  
album, *Black Eyed Boy*,  
lacked some of the muscle of  
the recorded version, but was  
still a topically Tamla update  
of traditional soul stylings.  
Spiteri was sure-footed  
throughout, but while the  
group's on-stage policy of  
more songs and less frippery  
is admirable, it can make for a  
bread-and-butter viewing ex-  
perience, the only real vari-  
ation coming when she played  
an encore, solo at the organ, of  
Al Green's *Tired of Being  
Alone*.  
Although their inspiration  
may have moved from the  
Lone Star State of their name  
to a Detroit address, they  
brought some of their old  
baggage, such as *Everyday  
Now* and *So-Called Friend*.  
Their first hit, *I Don't Want A  
Lover* was noticeably de-  
ranged, Ally McEraline's  
guitar touches taking it closer  
to funk territory.

PAUL SEXTON



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## EDUCATION

## Labour's pledge is to give more power to the people

## What if your son does not shine?

Hugh Thompson on boys who fail to achieve at independent schools

There is nothing more exasperating than the child with academic ability and promise who decides to settle for mediocre A levels rather than going for the keys to the best university places.

Although no one argues that every teenage girl takes to A levels like a duck to water, boys seem to fall behind in the A-level race. Even selective independent schools, with all the motivational support and push at their disposal, report that between 5 and 10 per cent of their sixth form could and should be doing better.

Several reasons are put forward: immaturity, which leads to lack of focus; school being seen as irrelevant; keeping street cred by not

Let the school do the nagging and threatening

trying and therefore having an excuse for failing. Some boys with successful parents can feel inferior if they struggle academically. And it has been suggested that the modular system of doing A levels takes some of the brighter boys' eyes off the ball

as they go in for the final months. "It is important in these cases that the young man owns the decision to get back into his studies," says Hugh Carson, the head of Malvern College. "Career counselling is often the key. If they can start to focus on what they want to do and what qualifications they need, they can start seeing the point of working."

"There are, of course, those who develop too late to settle down for their A levels, and many of those go on to achieve amazing things. Bowing to the power of reward and punishment is not the answer; there has to be consent."

It may be that parents have an unrealistic view of their child's capabilities and their expectations are demotivating. Many young people go on to university only to drop out. Not all children are high-flyers and many who do badly at school have the practical and creative qualities to do well in the "real" world.

Many entrepreneurs are too self-opinionated and individualistic to finish or benefit from school. Last year in a letter to *The Times*

the Headmaster of Ampleforth College, Leo Chamberlain, said: "An Abbot of Ampleforth was once asked what happened in later life to the denizens of the bottom form. He replied that they generally employed the scholars."

But what of the parents? Stephen Roberts, the Headmaster of Felsted, says: "I think there should be a good guy/bad guy division of roles. Let the school do the nagging and threatening; home must always be a place they can turn to and get support. At sixth-form level, punishments such as taking away sport and social facilities are more effective than giving book tokens and house points. We make them realise that this is not a holiday camp.

Close attention and counselling usually works, but there is always a hard core who will never see the light. Most of the problems are early on in the course when they are least mature."

Of course different schools have different selection criteria, traditions and ambitions and are therefore slightly different.

Manchester Grammar School prides itself on its position in the premier division where As and Bs at A level are the norm. It is against this standard that underachievement is related. As elsewhere, about 10 per cent of the boys in the sixth form will have to be taken to one side.

Surmaster Neil Sheldon says: "Of the 20 or 30 out of a sixth form of 200 who we feel are in danger of underperforming, only two or three will seriously let themselves down in the end. They are usually disaffected with the school and therefore hard to reach. We target those we feel are slipping and at interview it is made very clear that they must continue to work hard and aim high."

"We appreciate that there are unprecedented distractions — social lives, sport, sex, part-time jobs — but we get the message across that, especially for the last six months, students must be blinkered; they must concentrate totally on the exams."

David Blunkett outlines his party's plans to shake up the Education Department

If we are to make a real difference in our education system, we must have a radical shift in policy and in the way that government operates. This means a shift in content and style so that we have an enabling approach which supports initiative from people on the ground.

We must look at how government departments operate, the services they provide and how they respond to the public. One of our first tasks if elected will be to transform the outlook, culture and ethos of government departments to ensure a clear focus on the real and immediate needs of the people they serve.

In the Department for Education and Employment, this will mean reviewing how effectively civil servants use their time and talents. This week we indicated that the department would have a minister of Cabinet rank reporting to the Secretary of State to put in place our key employment programmes. This shows the important status which the department will have in a Labour government.

Staff at all levels must be clear about the policies they are being asked to implement — but they must also be in a position to influence decision-making. We know that many civil servants joined the service because of their commitment to public service, and those who should be in direct contact with the public — in schools, colleges, training centres, jobcentres, business and commerce — must be able to report frankly on what is working and what is not.

Labour is proposing to develop a Standards and Effectiveness Unit and database within the department to enable best practice from schools, Ofsted and LEAs to be spread quickly by using the Internet and other media. Those who gain insights from visiting schools or attending conferences will be able to make a direct input. Collecting and disseminating best practice will be central.

Technology can also ensure a two-way channel of communication with parents, pupils and students. The possibilities are enormous.

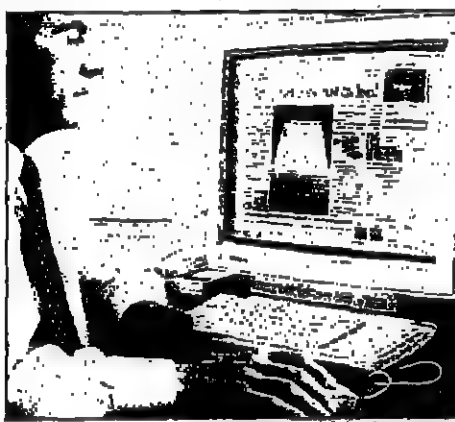
We will also draw in those from outside with the right skills and experience to help us to carry through our programme. Senior staff — as politically neutral civil servants — will be expected to speak at, and participate in, major conferences. They will be identifiable and identified with the work of the department.

Every civil servant should have the opportunity to contribute. Initiative



PARENTS

"We must also look at ways of extending consultation effectively to those who use our education services"



TECHNOLOGY

"Technology can also ensure a two-way channel of communication with parents, pupils and students"



CONFERENCES

"I hope we can cut down on the plethora of professional conferences held each year"



CREATING JOBS

"In employment, it will not be government which creates jobs, but government which backs those who can create them"

should be acknowledged and rewarded, with civil servants encouraged to identify unnecessary bureaucracy. Anyone identifying savings by eliminating unnecessary tasks should be helped to reallocate their time and gain appropriate new skills. We must cut the avalanche of paper issued by the department and agencies every year. We want to reduce red tape for those carrying out policy.

The department should practise what it preaches. Investors in People should be the norm throughout, with training and updating of skills available in a sensible and planned way.

Communications from different directorates and agencies must be co-ordinated to avoid duplication and overload, and targeted to the appropriate audience. The 1995 efficiency scrutiny into the administrative burdens on schools was a good first step in this direction. I am keen to investigate how we can make greater use of new technology in this area — not just to send material out to schools, but to give them the opportunity to respond.

I hope we can cut down on the plethora of professional conferences held each year. I would like to see fewer, more successful forums for discussion — constructive working seminars rather than empty talking shops: the exchange of professional expertise and experience, rather than the same old speakers reciting to the same old audiences. I will also review departmental procedures to cut down on the number of meetings internally.

Consultation must be genuine. We must move beyond the farcical consultation exercises that have been the hallmark of this Government: support for the flagship measures on extending selection and the unannounced expansion of schools has been around 3 per cent. Equally, we must also look at ways of extending consultation effectively to those who use our education services as well as those who deliver them. The constant change to the national curriculum, at a cost to the taxpayer of £744

million — before Sir Ron Dearing sorted it out is a lesson to us all. The extension of the nursery voucher scheme without waiting to evaluate the pilots has been followed by genuine concern from the select committee and playgroups about reduced parental choice. This refusal to listen to the people on the ground runs the risk of leading to unwelcome policies.

It is part of the arrogance of a Government which, after 18 years, still does not understand that it works on behalf of the public and not itself. This is why we need an "enabling government" — putting the machinery of government behind those people on the ground who are taking responsibility for their own lives and initiating their own effective solutions.

In employment, it will not be government which creates jobs, but government which backs those who can create them. This is why we support partnerships with private enterprise, such as the Glasgow Wise group's intermediate labour market

approach to job creation and enterprise. The development of our personal job accounts — pilots offering the long-term unemployed useful work, education or support in starting a business — depends on breaking down barriers between government agencies and departments and directing resources to the needs of the individual.

Our proposals will demand a great deal of imagination from all those involved — and much change. The department has already been through enormous upheavals with the amalgamation of education and employment. It is our intention to continue the process of positive change — to enable civil servants to do their job better by being more directly connected with the world beyond Whitehall.

I am convinced that there will be a warm welcome from civil servants to a reappraisal of their role, facing outwards and relating directly to parents, students and teachers.

© The author is Shadow Education and Employment Secretary.

Stephen Gardiner on a pioneering school that encourages pupils to study architecture

At Brandelhow School in Putney, west London, an exciting educational idea is being explored. Imaginative proposals for the playground have been produced, mainly by seven and eight-year-olds under the supervision of Sue Winn, the deputy head, and with input from the architectural partnership, ArchEd.

It was a simple and very good idea, practical as well as functional. As Sarah Grove, the head teacher, and Ms Winn saw it, here was a playground that was a mere leftover tarmac space, an adjunct to the building that partially surrounds it on three sides and a waste of an opportunity.

This was a pity for another reason — everything else about the school works exceptionally well.

It was designed by the late Erno Goldfinger, a well-known modern architect in his day, and opened in 1950. Brandelhow was recently listed and is conspicuous for its generous internal planning, the quality of its detail, large areas of glass and a combined feeling of strength and lightness. This is catching. Everywhere there is a sense of a happy, creative community. The imagination of the children runs through it with their stunning decorations, paintings, drawings and patterns. But this excellence should catch on outside as well.

While there was much else that needed attending to, they decided to focus only on the playground because it would make an excellent project for the children.

To get this under way, Ms Grove talked to heads of other schools in Wandsworth, and through them heard about an



Pupils at Brandelhow School plan their new playground in a discussion session

## Children build for the future

educationally orientated group called ArchEd run by Rob Dark and Ian Horton, two architects who have been working with schoolchildren since 1992.

Why an appreciation of architecture has not been included in the curriculum alongside art has remained a mystery for a long time. Pictures of period buildings, for example, can help to bring a history lesson to life.

Such is not ArchEd's aim, but that is not to say it won't happen in the future for older children. For now, as illustrated by the Brandelhow experiment, Mr Dark and Mr Horton work to increase chil-

dren's knowledge and understanding of architecture, to give them some idea of what goes into the making of their surroundings so that, they say, children can learn how to enjoy and contribute to the field. To accomplish that is an achievement in itself and ArchEd is the first in the field to attempt it.

The architects say they have never worked with such young children before and were amazed by their imaginative responses.

This could, they believe, be because Ms Grove and Ms Winn had decided that the proposals were to be a real undertaking, not a theoretical project. In this way it was a venture with a practical purpose, and had the special function of finding a way of separating activities in the playground (some wanted to play football, some played other games) without dividing it.

This is where imagination came in. The aim was both to improve the space and make it more exciting, an adventure playground, so to speak.

ArchEd visited once a week, mornings only, between November 8 and December 6 last year to show the children how an architect would approach

the problem. To introduce them to the design process, to the use of a scale as a measure, and to the presentation of the design with drawings, perspectives and models.

As a basis to work from, and to have a picture of the area involved, Mr Dark and Mr Horton produced a plan which they called a "bird's-eye view", showing the outline of the playground, the school and its boundaries.

There were photographs of special features which the children had to locate on the plan; and a "brief", the list of possible activities — anything from games to gardening, nature trails and mazes — that might be included. Anything, in fact, to stimulate the imagination.

The project worked on a series of levels. On one it generated the thrill of discovery. On another, there was the practical educational outcome via cross-fertilisation of subjects: measuring the buildings and tree heights brings in maths; the shapes of types of trees by the shapes of their leaves evokes nature; observation of the characteristics and detail of nearby houses involves drawing and painting; and the story of the school site — the original was bombed during the Second World War — is local history.

From being immersed in the excitement of beaver about among all this, the children gained the confidence to make the leap from collecting facts to applying them in design, drawings and models.

So far, the scheme has been funded from a government regeneration budget. What is needed now is a further grant to finish the job.

## The taste of adventure must not turn sour

Phil Revell on the measures taken since the Lyme Bay tragedy

As summer approaches, many parents will be receiving information from schools about children's activity holidays. Most schools organise some kind of adventurous activity, ranging from treks across the Himalayas to nature walks in the local park.

Schools stress the development aspects of these trips and most parents would concur. However, the risks were highlighted four years ago this week when four students died on what should have been a simple canoeing trip across Lyme Bay in Dorset. After the Lyme Bay disaster there was a public outcry.

Investigations revealed that instructors were barely qualified to take themselves on to the sea and that the alarm was raised far too late. Peter Kite, the centre's managing director, was found guilty of manslaughter and served a prison sentence.

The judge hearing the case commented: "Where parents and teachers send their children for activity holidays, the potential for injury or death is too obvious to be left for the inadequate vagaries of self-regulation."

David Jamieson, MP for the Plymouth constituency where the Lyme Bay victims lived, helped to lobby for a new licensing system. Eventually the Government brought in the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act which allowed for the inspection and registration of activity centres. Tourism Quality Services in Cardiff won the contract to administer the inspection scheme and are currently pro-

cessing applications from the thousand or so centres that may need to be licensed.

Marcus Bailie is the director of the inspection authority, the Adventure Activities Licensing Association (AALA). Mr Bailie is an expedition canoeist with wide experience of outdoor education, and his appointment reassured many within the industry who had been concerned about a too bureaucratic structure.

But some confusion remains. Not all activities are covered by the legislation, and many centres continue to operate without a licence. Trips abroad are not covered at all.

Nor are schools covered for any adventurous activities that they provide for their pupils. The Consumers Association pressed for schools to be included when the legislation was first considered. Their spokesman says: "All children are entitled to the same level of protection... the regulations are not going to do the job that parents expect. People are looking for a guarantee that a minimum standard of safety will be met."

Gordonstoun, in Scotland, is world-famous for the adven-

turous slant of its curriculum. Students sail and often trek in the Cairngorms. James Thomas, the director of external affairs, says: "It is of vital importance that the people who lead these things are as well qualified as they possibly can be, and their qualifications must keep abreast of ongoing developments."

Martin Hudson, who chairs the British Activity Holidays Association, welcomes the new regulations, but says: "Good providers may be unable to obtain licences because they are outside the scope of the Act." The association is so concerned about the possible confusion that it has set up its own independent inspection regime, which will cover centres operating outside the UK.

The AALA is aware of the potential for misunderstanding that lies within the regulatory structure. Over the past few months officials have been in discussion with activity providers not at present covered by the regulations with a view to setting up a voluntary scheme.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Scout Association have been involved in the discussions, and John Welsh Heron, the AALA spokesman, believes a voluntary scheme could be in operation before the end of the year.

In the meantime, four years after Lyme Bay, parents still do not have a foolproof method of checking the status of an activity holiday provider.

© Parents can check whether centres have been licensed by ringing the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority on 01222 755715.



## POSTS

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- Experience in the setting, marking and moderation of examinations and assessments;
- High computer literacy;
- Knowledge of the law and, in particular of ADR, would be an asset but is not essential as relevant training will be made available to the successful candidate;
- A highly motivated leader;
- A good communicator, team player and an effective administrator;
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# A gentleman and a player

— — — — —



# Hugh's all-consuming interest in wildlife

There is the Rolf Harris view of the animal kingdom and then there is Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's. For while Harris offers us unimpeachable variations on "cuddly little chap, isn't he?" in *Animal Hospital*, F-W's interest can be boiled down to one simple question: "Can you eat it?"

As regular readers may recall, when F-W goes eat-fishing I am never far behind. I can't recall a television event that left quite the same impression as last year's lesson in skinning an eel. "For this," he began brightly, "you need a stout post, a four-inch nail and a pair of pliers." It made Michael Palin's famous difficulty with snuck alive snake look like another episode of Rick Stein.

Last night, F-W, now on board the good ship *Bain Marie*, went eat-fishing again. I packed my tool kit. As it turned out, however, I needn't have bothered because in

this instalment of *A Cook on the Wild Side* (Channel 4) he was going ever fishing, for the tiny little baby eels that creep along the River Severn under cover of darkness. "Wiggly little chaps," Harris would have said had he been there, wrinkling his nose for full effect. F-W was there and we knew what he was thinking. Suddenly, the *Sargasso Sea* seemed awfully long way away.

Now at this point I was totally relaxed. Evers were obviously far too small to need skinning. I put the pliers away and settled down to enjoy the comic banter of Hartley Everett, West Country eat-catcher extraordinaire. Evers got more cunning as they grew longer, see: "Ten per cent longer, 10 per cent cleverer, [there was a long, West Country pause] than a cabbage."

And with that it was nearly time for breakfast. The evers in Hartley's bucket wriggled prettily in anticipation — breakfast, yum-

my. He was going to cook them with slices of Old Spot bacon and a goose egg, while F-W was showing off with something involving garlic, chilli flakes and rock salt. But first they had to get rid of the "wump," a sort of slime that keeps evers... well, slimy. This was achieved very gently, with a tea-towel. The evers wriggled in grateful delight. "Cook, much better," said no more nasty wump. And with that Hartley and Hugh dumped them in two very hot frying pans... alive.

Really, where was Rolf Harris when we needed him? Would he get the frying pan to the vets in time? Would he hover in the operating theatre, whispering "baby gets brought in with nasty, first-degree burns?" Would he utter the dread "it's not looking very good," or bounce back with his recovery room best with:

## REVIEW



Matthew Bond

"Cute little chaps, aren't they?" Alas, (particularly for the evers) we never found out. By the time we returned from the long shot to which the director had tactfully retreated, the fatal damage was more or less done. F-W was pushing a few would-be escapees to the bottom of his pan with his deadly spatula (but all the perfunctory of Arabia won't get the wump off that). "We just want to get

the little blenders dead as quickly as possible," he muttered.

Not a sentiment, I expect, you'll find aired very often in the new series of *Animal Hospital* (BBC1) as Rolf and the gang descended on the Hampden Veterinary Practice in Aylesbury. "They've been treating animals here for over 100 years — incredible isn't it?" Quite incredible, Rolf.

For the new series the emphasis seems to have been switched away from cloying sentiment towards humour. Basically, unless your animal has got something pretty funny wrong with it, it's hardly worth turning up. Still, the good burghers of Bucks had laboured long and hard to put on a good display of comic ailments. We had a neurotic parrot, a python that would have had two penises had it not turned out to be a girl, a duck with catarracts, and a cat which might have had a stroke. Hang on, a cat with a stroke — isn't that a bit

serious? "Will she need a CAT scan?" joshed Rolf. Normal service had been resumed.

The traditional cliff-hanger was provided by Louis, a black cat which had clearly had a Fearnley-Whittingstall cross its path recently. The resultant bad luck had caused a massive bacterial infection and possibly a brace of lethal fevers. "It's not looking very good," whispered Rolf. The cat, however, still has a fighting chance of making it to next week: which is more than can be said for the evers.

And more, unless I'm very much mistaken, than can be said of James Wilby, who finished the first instalment of *Original Sin* (ITV) with a stuffed snake (kapok rather than sage and onion) stuck down his throat. Never mind, plenty more stars to go round — Ian Bannen, Sylvia Syms, Amanda Root, Cathryn Harrison:

you have to get well down to the minor roles before you even begin to find names you don't know.

This fairly outrageous casting provides the clue that we are in for the most theatrical and mannered adaptation of a P.D. James "Dagbliss" novel that I can recall. Real life has effectively come to a halt, along with anything resembling real work for Commander Dagbliss (Roy Marsden) who spends much of the time looking moodily out of his riverside window.

With the help of some reasonably convincing computer graphics, a Venetian palazzo has sprung up on the bank of the Thames (so far everybody involved either lives or works by the river) providing offices for the ailing Peverell Press and a setting for what is essentially an urban version of a country house murder mystery. The body count currently stands at two. Unless you include the evers...

## CHOICE

**Tomorrow's World: Megalab '97** (BBC1, 8.00pm)  
The grand finale to the BBC's Science Week is a live, viewer-participation programme from the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. Scientists may doubt the scientific validity of the Megalab concept of using the television audience to create a huge laboratory, but it never fails to produce watchable results. One of the experiments being carried out tonight goes to the heart of British legal procedure by looking at how psychology affects the jury system. Another exercise, touching on genetics, evolution and the brain, tries to establish whether left-handed people are more, or less, talented than right-handers. The natural world is not neglected, however, and there are items about the red squirrel's battle for survival and a contest to see which of the world's top robotic mice get the cheese.

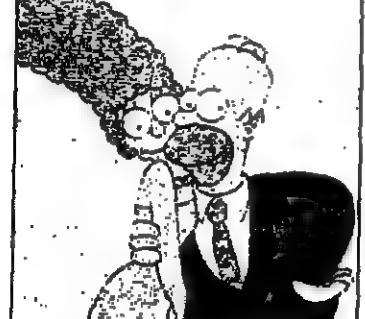
**Gardeners' World** (BBC2, 8.00pm)  
You never know with Bob Flowerdew, a gardening guru as unconventional as his amazing piglet. Regular viewers of this programme will know that Flowerdew's idiosyncratic uses for old cars, discarded car tyres and derelict freezers. Nothing quite as eccentric as on view tonight but the man who has turned the recycling of the unwanted into an art form has some handy tips of what to do with the ash from a stove. After that the show settles into a more orthodox pattern as the cheery Alan Titchmarsh continues to brighten up his back yard and Roy Lancaster begins the first of four reports on the wild flowers of South Africa. And what could be more solidly traditional than a visit to a National Trust property? Peckover House in Wexham, Cambridgeshire, was laid out in Victorian times and retains its period character.

**Doomsday Virus** (ITV, 9.00pm) (not in Ireland)  
The disaster movie lives on in this tale of a deadly virus which escapes from a laboratory in Germany and gets on board an American 747 taking holidaymakers back to New York for Christmas. It is soon clear that they will be lucky to get there. Hardly has the plane taken off from Frankfurt than the carrier of the strain has crashed his last. All 250 passengers could be dead in 48 hours. To make matters worse, country after country refuses the aircraft landing rights. To make things even worse, the CIA comes up with a novel, if extreme, solution. Such is the plot, and plot is mostly what this American mini-series offers. The cast includes Jane Leeves, the English star of *Frasier*, and other faces familiar from US imports, but they get so little chance to shine that the robots might just as well have been taken by the robots.

**Silent Witness: Only the Lonely** (BBC1, 9.30pm)  
Silent Witness is either becoming less gruesome or we are getting used to seeing rotting corpses spread out on the floor. This time the still is a 28-year-old married woman who has been strangled with her rights. Gillian Richmond's script sets up a classic whodunit. The victim had been having an affair, which makes her husband a suspect. But she may have decided to end the relationship, in which case the murder could have been her lover's revenge. But if this sounds too simple a case to spread over two episodes, Richmond has other possibilities with which to leave us. At any rate, the investigation is a lot more intriguing than the desultory rumination between Amanda Burton's homicide pathologist and the dreary policeman or the incoherent subplot about her strange sister. Peter Waymark

**6.00am Open University: Reflections on a Global Screen** (BBC2, 6.25 Reading the Landscape (3817470) 7.15 News 7.30 Wacky Races (1) (0653315) 7.55 The Really Wild Show (1) (1033388) 8.20 Just So Stories (1) (7422266) 8.35 The Record (561973) 9.00 The French Espionage (566780) 9.15 The Biology Collection (158860) 9.45 Watch (7734131) 10.00 Playdays (18315) 10.30 Holch Polch House (2048773) 10.50 Cosmo and Dibs in Punjab and English (5612334) 11.00 Look and Read (0948112) 11.20 Short Circuit (933180) 11.40 English Time (871534) 12.00 English File (3288) 12.30pm Working Lunch (34402) 1.00 Scene (55334) 1.30 Le Club (3818186) 1.40 Words and Pictures (8318315) 1.45 Just So Stories (3671804) 2.10 Sport on Friday. Helen Rollason introduces coverage of the ladies' short programme from the World Figure Skating Championships (576857) 2.35 News (1) 4.00 Today's Day (675) 4.30 Ready, Steady, Cook (860) 5.00 Esther (1) (8131)

**5.30 Going, Going, Gone** (112)



Marge and Homer Simpson (6.00pm)

**6.00 The Simpsons** Lisa is shown how to use the saxophone to express her sadness (1) (224179) **6.25 Star Trek** (1) (221353) **7.10 Pole to Pole** Michael Palin arrives in Ethiopia (1) (1) (228119) **8.00 Birding with Bill Oddie** on the island of Islay, where there are thousands of wild geese; plus: how to attract birds to the garden (4315) **8.30 Gardeners' World** in the first of four reports from South Africa. Roy Lancaster surveys Cape Province's wild flowers (1) (6150) **9.00 Attack of the 50th Woman** (1994) with Daryl Hannah. A tongue-in-cheek remake of the 1950s cult sci-fi film. A long-suffering housewife, out searching for her phantasmagoric husband, is confronted by a UFO. She begins to grow at an alarming rate, taking revenge on all. Directed by Christopher Guest (1) (5421)

**10.28 Shapes of the Invisible** (342860) **10.50 Newsworld** (1) (586650) **11.25 World Figure Skating Championships** The climax of the ice dance competition (861792) **12.05am This Life** (1) (863646) **12.50 Start the White Rabbit** Last in series (5461260) **1.20 Forbidden: Christopher Frayling on El Topo** (380700) **1.30-3.35 El Topo** (1971) Cult classic that blends 1960s mysticism with spaghetti western violence and culminates in a graphic, bloody massacre directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. In Spanish with English subtitles (83919)

**2.00am Weather** (8031193) **VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusCodes** The numbers next to each TV programme listing are VideoPlus+ codes. To watch a programme with a VideoPlus+ code, tip in the Video PlusCode for the programme you wish to record. VideoPlus+ PlusCodes (1) and Video Programmer are trademarks of Gemstar Development Ltd.

**6.00am GMTV** (8354334) **9.25 Chain Letters** (1) (4282886) **9.55 Regional News** (1) (5074773) **10.00 The Time, the Place** (52911) **10.30 This Morning** (11471222) **12.20pm Regional News** (1) (7061889) **12.30 News** (1) and weather (388353) **12.55 Wish You Were Here?** (1) (1) (6361044) **1.25 Home and Away** (1) (4728680) **1.50 Murder, She Wrote** (802889) 2.50 Get a Life (571792) **3.20 News** (1) (7055119) **3.25 Regional News** (1) (2450080) **3.30 Rosie and Jim** (765709) 3.40 Sim Pig (9410402) 3.50 Cannon Time (9416886) 4.00 Zzzap! (222131) 4.15 Journey (1) (1941131) 4.40 Gladiators. Train 2 Win (1) (489426) **5.10 A Country Practice** (5131247) **5.40 News** (1) and weather (477808) **6.00 Home and Away** (1) (211606) **6.25 HTV Weather** (197688) **6.30 HTV News** (1) (131) **7.00 Lucky Numbers** Game show presented by Shane Richie (1) (5421) **7.30 Corruption** Street Trice defends herself against Jack's accusations and gives him an ultimatum, while Alan raises a few eyebrows (1) (315)



Russell Boulton Investigates (8.00pm)

**8.00 The Bill: Copier DS Boulton** (Russell Boulton) investigate when a woman is attacked soon after moving into her new flat and believes that there could be a link to an earlier unsolved case (1) (1841) **8.30 Eye Spy** Solina Scott presents more real-life dramas captured on surveillance cameras (1) (8666) **9.00 Doomsday Virus** Gripping, two-part disaster drama about the passengers on a plane learning that they may be carriers of a deadly virus (1) Continues after the news and concludes tomorrow (8902)

**10.00 News** (1) and weather (31315) **10.30 HTV News** (1) (275150) **10.40 Doomsday Virus** Continues (1) (559752) **11.25 Rugby World Cup** Sevens. Jim Rosenthal presents highlights of the first day's play in Hong Kong, as England begin their defence of the title. With analysis from Jonah Lomu and Gavin Hastings (58173)

**12.25am Box Office America** (1) (5718025) **1.00 Funky Bunker** (57025) **2.00 Club Nation** (5169483) **3.00 Shab** (224639) **3.55 Collins and Maconie's Movie Club** (1) (1388090) **4.35-5.00** (1) (36984754) **5.00 Coronation Street** (1) (1) (36387) **5.30 News**

**As HTV West except:** **12.55pm-1.25 A Country Practice** (6361044) **1.55 Savannah** (8001537) **2.45 Breakaways** (5846179) **2.50-3.20 Our House** (5717792) **3.10-4.40 Shortland Street** (5131247) **6.25-7.00 Central News** (579402) **12.25am ITV Sport Classics** (7583551) **1.40 Funky Bunker** (5714209) **1.45 Baywatch** (500358) **2.30 Cyber Cafe** (83174) **3.00 Collins and Maconie's Movie Club** (14795) **3.30 Daring the Enemy** (5591483) **4.25 Central Jobfinder '97** (4345700) **6.20 Aalen Eye** (1251648)

**WESTCOUNTRY** **As HTV West except:** **12.20pm-12.30 Illuminations** (7046570) **12.55-1.25 Emmerdale** (6361044) **1.50 High Road** (11401805) **5.10-5.40 Home and Away** (5131247) **6.00-7.00 Westcountry Live** (75247) **12.25am Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Rusty Escape** A woman is sentenced to life imprisonment for a crime she claims she did not commit (5718025)

**As HTV West except:** **12.55pm-1.25 A Country Practice** (6361044) **1.55 Savannah** (8000808) **2.50-3.20 Serve You Right** (5717792) **3.10-4.40 Home and Away** (5131247) **6.00-7.00 Meridian Tonight** (75247) **12.25am Alfred Hitchcock Presents** (5718025) **4.25 Sound Bites** (38355377) **5.00 Newsroom** (38367)

**As HTV West except:** **12.19pm Anglia Air Watch** (7065805) **12.55-1.25 A Country Practice** (6361044) **1.55 Savannah** (8000808) **2.50-3.20 Dogs with Dumbie** (5717792) **3.10-4.40 Shortland Street** (5131247) **6.25-7.00 Anglia News** (579402) **10.29 Anglia Air Watch** (348986) **12.25am Alfred Hitchcock Presents** (5718025) **4.25 Sound Bites** (38355377)

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**6.00am Sesame Street** (80228) 7.00 The Big Breakfast (47315) 9.00 Bewitched (1) (14732) **9.30 Schools** Eureka! Ancient Greece (1) 9.45 Stop Look Listen (1) (1) 10.00 Fourways Farm (1) 10.10 Summer Term Preview 10.25 Technology 10.40 Off Limits (1) 11.05 The Science 11.20 Stage One 11.38 Schools at Work 11.40 Living Pool (1) (970782) **12.00 The Lost Gardens of Heligan** (1) (1) (82228) 12.30pm Baby It's You (1) (1) (585) (58570) 1.00 Ellen (1) (1) (40402) 1.30 Australia Wide (57841) **2.00 Racing from Doncaster** The 2.05, 2.35, 3.10 and 3.40 races (3773) **4.00 Fifteen-to-One** (1) (804) 4.30 Countdown (1) (228) 5.00 Ricki Lake (1) (3523) 5.30 Pet Rescue (1) (808) **6.00 ITV Friday** The guests include the photographer David Bailey (78889) **7.00 Channel 4 News** (1) (781570) **7.55 Black Holes of Science** What would it mean if we understood consciousness? (355042) **8.00 The Lost Gardens of Heligan** The restoration of the Sundial Gardens, once the finest herbaceous border in England (2/8) (1) (2711)

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## GOLF 44

Baker's resurgence points to uneasy Ryder Cup view

## SPORT

FRIDAY MARCH 21 1997

## ICE SKATING 46

When passion plays role in setting the ice on fire



## United unwrap priceless gift of boredom

When the lights dimmed in Estádio das Antas on Wednesday night, there was pride, professionalism and passion for Manchester United. For the first time since Heyes, in 1985, the English champions are among the final four of Europe. Savour the moment, because their next opponents are Borussia Dortmund, and when England faces Germany in a semi-final the portents are clear to all.

More will be known this afternoon, when lots are drawn to decide whether the first leg will be played in Manchester or Dortmund. It used to be automatic that it was preferable to play the away leg first, yet given that Alex Ferguson's side created all the tempo, scored all the goals that were necessary against FC Porto in the first leg at Old Trafford, maybe that should be revised.

If United were indeed to be drawn away, and even if they came back undefeated from Dortmund, would they be so committed to attacking football at home, or would they become more tentative with the final beckoning?

Temperamentally, tactically and physically, Dortmund will be a class above the hollow opposition that Porto turned out to be. Perhaps the Portuguese were over-rated, opinion based too much on their triumph over AC Milan and too little on the decline of the former Italian champions.

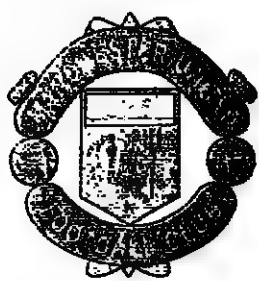
Yet Ferguson's pride in what his team is achieving is surely justified. Barely six months ago, in Istanbul, he had talked of his team being "so young, there are times when they don't understand what's happening against them. They'll learn."

Indeed they did. By Wednesday they had old heads on young

Alex Ferguson's masterful game of patience was well worth waiting for, says Rob Hughes

shoulders, ensuring that — no matter what else was happening around them — their rivals on the pitch were nullified. Ferguson, when his team performs, tends to be less effusive in praise of them: "We showed good discipline, but we can play better," he said. "I don't think we played magnificently, but we were comfortable."

He was, in effect, acknowledging that the patience, the waiting game so often inflicted on England, was easily achieved. Boring, you might



say, but for the vision of the final mission.

Up above where Ferguson sat, Martin Edwards, the United chairman, had the look of a banker calling in his loan. United's prize-money for getting this far is

£6.25 million. Add the gate receipts, another million pounds or so per home game and the galvanising effect on world merchandising, and you are looking at £15 million reaped from this particular European journey.

Yet it never was about money

alone. Wilf McGuinness, the former United manager who inherited Matt Busby's mantle, was dancing in the stadium fully half an hour after the final whistle. He would tell anyone who might listen that United had shed the naivety, particularly the defensive simplicity, that cost English clubs so dear over the past decade in Europe.

The team is still evolving, though. Keane, Giggs and Beckham have rapidly become as influential as Cantona, and Solskjaer continues to surprise even Ferguson, who bought him from Norway last summer.

Dortmund will be without Matthias Sammer, their leader, their free-flowing libero, because he received a second yellow card in Auxerre on Wednesday, but the vastly experienced Stefan Reuter is eligible to return. Dortmund have so many quality players in so many

parts of the field that 12 of their players have hit the target in this European campaign.

No one, not even Juventus, can remotely match such a statistic. They now meet Ajax, whom they beat in the final last May, and whose recuperation after so many injuries and so many players lost under the Bosman ruling, means that it is Europe or nothing this time.

One of the Ajax scorers in a tumultuous victory over Atlético Madrid on Wednesday was Dani. Remember him? They just might at Upton Park, for he is the Portuguese midfielder who could not make the grade for West Ham United.

Dani, profiting among players such as the De Boer twins and the rejuvenated Jari Litmanen, has scored three goals for Ajax in the Champions' League... quality finds its level in this competition.

## Ginola to be given transfer at end of the season

By DAVID MADDOCK

GIVEN Newcastle United's performance in their UEFA Cup debate against Monaco on Tuesday night, it was hardly surprising to hear yesterday that David Ginola, the France international winger, had asked for a transfer.

When Ginola presented his request last week, it was politely but firmly declined by the club. The Frenchman will not be allowed to leave until the end of the season, when Kenny Dalglish will begin the daunting process of rebuilding his shattered side.

Ginola was still in France yesterday, given a few days off training to spend time in a new home he has built in the countryside between Monaco and Marseille, which is perhaps an indication of his likely destination next season.

The Frenchman has now come to an uneasy truce with Dalglish and has agreed not to rock the boat until the end of this season, when his request will be met.

If Ginola is ready to leave Newcastle in the summer, then Peter Beardsley has decided to play on despite a suggestion he may take up a coaching position with the club next season. "There are 15 months left on my contract and I'll be starting again next season, trying to win a place in the team," he said.

Middlesbrough have been presented with a thorny problem days before their Coca-Cola Cup final with Leicester City. Juninho, the Brazil international and midfield inspiration for the Teesside club, has been called up by his country for an international match against Chile on April 2, just four days before the final at Wembley.

Juninho is certain to travel home for the match, which will present his last opportunity to force his way into the reckoning for a place in the Brazil squad for the World Cup finals next season, as the national coach, Zagallo, has indicated he will bring the squad together a year before the tournament.

Middlesbrough's problem is that Juninho will return, lagged on the Friday before the game and they must be worried about the state he will return in.

## Hoddle plans for the future

## Butt recruited for England's youth brigade

By ROB HUGHES, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

TERRY VENABLES had them by the dozen: Glenn Hoddle has waited and waited for the opportunity of a friendly international match in which he might experiment.

Yesterday, announcing a squad of 25 players for the match at Wembley against Mexico, on Saturday March 29, the England coach began to ring some changes.

Nicky Butt is included in the party, as well as David Beckham, a potential refit made at Old Trafford, harnessing the vision of Beckham in the playmaker role that so many believe his potential demands, and giving him the understanding and the tenacity of his Manchester United colleague.

This, indeed, may be the crux of Hoddle's forward thinking. Butt, 22, and already honoured with the captaincy of the under-21 side, could be the future, the fire to replace that of Ince, once it cools. Ince needs both an understudy and someone to ensure that he is on his mettle.

At the start of the World Cup qualifying matches, Ince had missed that it was up to experienced people like him — indeed, he also included Gascoigne in this statement — to show the discipline, the maturity, the leadership to younger players coming through for their country.

The youth brigade, whom Hoddle may well promote in England's cause, is burgeoning. Sol Campbell and Dominic Matteo, the same age as Butt and a little older than Beckham and Robbie Fowler, though all of them were left standing, in terms of precocity, by Gary Neville. He, quite

## SQUAD

Walker (Tottenham), D. James (Liverpool), I. Flowers (Blackburn), N. Martin (Leeds), G. Neville (Aston Villa), G. Le Tissier (Blackburn), G. Southgate (Aston Villa), A. Adams (Aston Villa), S. Campbell (Tottenham), D. Matteo (Liverpool), G. Padieller (Aston Villa), M. Keown (Aston Villa), P. Ince (Tottenham), D. Beckham (Aston Villa), S. McManis (Aston Villa), D. Butler (Aston Villa), M. Le Tissier (Southampton), R. Lee (Newcastle), D. Anderson (Tottenham), J. Hacking (Liverpool), N. Barmby (Everton), S. Fowler (Liverpool), I. Wright (Aston Villa), N. Butt (Aston Villa), E. Sheeringham (Tottenham).

superb in the cautionary tactics employed by Manchester United in Oporto on Wednesday night, is also 22, but has 17 full caps to his name. The impetuosity, the recklessness in the tackle that once betrayed him, seems to be smoothing out.

Another youthful possibility is to call upon the Liverpool triumvirate of Steve McManis, who is, of course, almost an England old timer by comparison, Jamie Redknapp and Fowler.

There are suspicions that Redknapp, with his appetite to link the play and his passing ability, is a pivotal player in the mind of Hoddle. He may even eventually be recast as Redknapp the central defender, the potential Matthias Sammer for England; playing as a libero, reading the game from the rear, but turning defence into instant attack, with elegance.

It is some role, requiring some vision, but a host of professional managers believe Redknapp's potential is as yet untapped. And Fowler? In this match against Mexico, when the result is not paramount, surely the young, prolific goalscorer will be given his full elevation to lead the national attack?

It may not happen. There are club games aplenty before March 29, and even in these days when a doctor's sick note is mandatory, do not bet against a decimation of Hoddle's chosen contingent.

Of course, there are absences before even a squad is contemplated. Seaman, Gascoigne, Merson, Shearer and Ferdinand are injured; Pearce is rested. Hoddle aware that the demands of player-management are extreme, not least when Pearce is trying to



Hoddle keeps faith with Le Tissier, despite criticism after his performance in the match against Italy

save the FA Carling Premiership status of his club, Nottingham Forest. There are no such caveats about the omission of Platt, who is fit for Arsenal, but silently slipping past his prime for England. A prolific and wonderfully industrious contribution he has made, but time waits for no former England captain.

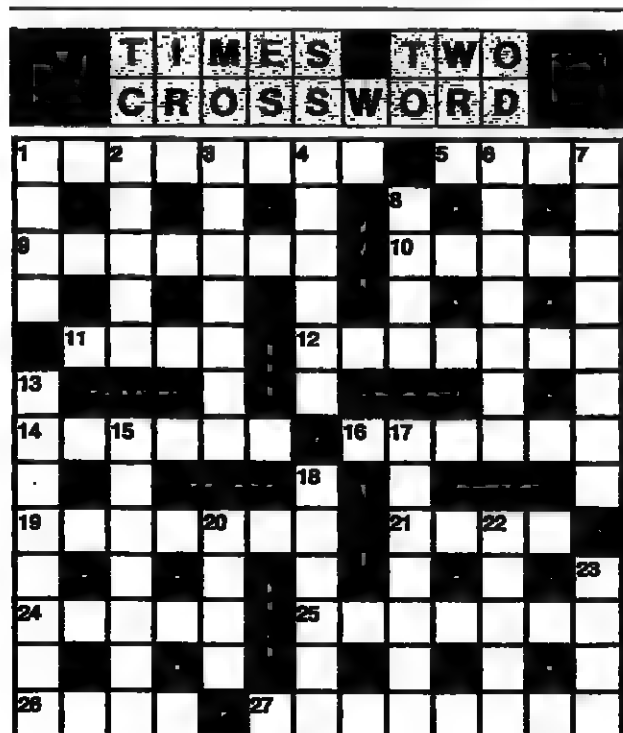
It does, however, recall two players whose England times seemed to be history. At last, for many of us who think that Nigel Martyn is the form goalkeeper, the Leeds player is selected by Hoddle, even if it has the ring of the closing of the stable door after Ian Walker's unfortunate debut in the home defeat that mattered,

against Italy, at Wembley. There is, more surprisingly, a recall to international arms for Martin Keown, the combative Arsenal defender. The England coach said yesterday that Keown, at 30, one of the youngsters around Highbury, is improving dramatically on the ball: the hidden tribute is that Arsène Wenger, Hoddle's mentor at Monaco, is smoothing some rugged edges.

And then there are Hoddle's acts of faith. He selects Darren Anderton, trusting that the Tottenham Hotspur player is for once fit to fulfil his gifts. He chooses Nick Barmby, even though Everton have not revived that little player's form. And there is Matthew Le

Tissier. The scapegoat of so many for the misapplied tactics and selection against Italy, Le Tissier remains synonymous with Hoddle's concept of how football should be played — a player of flair, perhaps of mood, but ultimately of skill, if the coaches dare trust it.

Earlier this week, Graeme Souness, the Southampton manager, only half trusted his captain in the club's dire need to win football matches. Hoddle, one presumes, will go all the way with Le Tissier, proving that belief has to be stubborn, and trying to demonstrate that both player and England coach were right all along. I hope Mexico is the starting point for that.



No 1047

## ACROSS

- 1 Queer, strange (8)
- 5 Quit; halt (4)
- 9 Quake, shiver (7)
- 10 Quiet note (5)
- 11 Quiz, examination (4)
- 12 Quips, sudden charges (7)
- 14 Quid pro quo (6)
- 16 Qualification, proviso (6)
- 19 Quota, share (7)
- 21 Quieten (4)
- 24 Quick (5)
- 25 Quelling (7)
- 26 Queue (4)
- 27 Quarter, mercy (8)

## DOWN

- 1 Play across green (4)
- 2 El Greco birthplace (5)
- 3 Crustacean, had Quadrille (7)
- 4 Opposed, loth (6)
- 6 Of the sense of touch (7)
- 7 One living off another (8)
- 8 Prevent; stooge (4)
- 13 Suggestion, plan (8)
- 15 Act of twisting; state of being twisted (7)
- 17 Warm public praise (7)
- 18 Gradually introduce (idea) (6)
- 20 Tiny bit; Greek I (4)
- 22 Language of Horace (5)
- 23 Quarry (4)

The solution to 1046 will be published Wednesday, March 26

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# Mobutu calls for national council as rebels plan polls

FROM SAM KILEY IN KINSHASA AND SUSAN BELL IN PARIS

ZAIRE'S ailing President Mobutu last night called for a ceasefire and the creation of a national council to resolve the crisis in his country.

Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, has said that he will agree to a ceasefire only after negotiations with the President on how the Zairean leader, who seized power in 1965, will step down. Rebels now occupy more than a fifth of the country, and captured its third largest city, Kisangani, on Saturday, raising fears of a coup in Kinshasa, the capital.

Mr Mobutu was expected to fly home from France today to try to resolve the political crisis, which is veering from absurdist drama to dangerous farce. His son, Nzanga Mobutu, also the President's spokesman, said that his father no longer ruled out talks with the leaders of the rebellion, but wished first to discuss the issue with political and military leaders in Kinshasa. Previously the President had said he intended to crush the rebels. It was not clear if a ceasefire remained a prior condition for starting negotiations.

Nzanga Mobutu also de-

nied reports that members of his family had fled to the Congo. Close family members were still with President Mobutu in France, he said.

The President left hospital in Monaco, where he has been receiving treatment after surgery for prostate cancer, on Wednesday to return to his luxury Riviera villa at Roquebrune-Cap Martin. His private plane has been on standby at Nice airport since Tuesday evening.

Yesterday his opponents and enemies jostled for positions in a collapsed Government while the rebels began organising elections in areas they control.

The Union for Democracy and Social Progress, the main opposition party in Kinshasa

Paris: France, President Mobutu's staunchest supporter, yesterday urged its citizens to leave Zaire (Susan Bell writes). It sent aircraft and about 100 troops to neighbouring Congo and Gabon in case it had to protect or evacuate an estimated 1,500 French nationals in Zaire.

that has failed to make an impact on Mr Mobutu's regime over the past six years, attempted simultaneously to ally itself with the eastern rebels and with the President.

Sitting in his garden under a mango tree Adrien Phongo, the party Secretary-General, yesterday announced that he was sending a delegation to open talks with Mr Kabila. "These should lead to a ceasefire and a government of national unity which will then organise elections," Dr Phongo said.

Then, as news that President Mobutu was expected to return to Kinshasa filtered through, his bold rhetoric crumbled. With the look of a child caught opening his parents' drinks' cabinet, Dr Phongo scrambled to ensure a secure future — should Zaire's big man regain control. "Of course, only the President can empower a prime minister," he said.

The President's wizardry has been eclipsed by the rebels' successes that were yesterday being celebrated with the organising of elections behind their lines for local administrative posts. In seven communes leaders will



Civilians in Kisangani welcome Zaire rebel leaders who plan to organise political meetings and hold elections for local officials within a week

be chosen who will, in turn, elect a mayor and provincial governor.

Mwansa Kongolo, the rebel justice commissioner, said: "We are here to give them power denied them for so long. That is the basic message we have and to illustrate it, we will have visible, but not perfect, elections."

Before he fell ill this is the sort of challenge Mr Mobutu would have relished. In the past 32 years he has run Zaire as his personal fiefdom, seeing off countless rebellions and invasions, with the help of France, Morocco and Belgium. But, since the uprising his main concerns have been his health and family.

His army, unpaid and under-equipped, has consistently given ground to the rebels. But, in common with his Opposition, Mr Mobutu has appeared unable to grasp that the rebels have the upper hand.

American State Department officials and diplomats in Kinshasa said yesterday that Mr

Mobutu and his entourage appeared to be "in denial" over the extent and threat of the rebellion. "They really don't seem to understand that Mobutu is not going to be able to come back and wave the magic fly whisk and bam — Kabila disappears," said a European ambassador.

Zaire's Prime Minister, was "removed" by parliamentarians earlier this week under pressure from the army, which blamed him for the theft of funds intended for the war effort. But yesterday he returned from regional talks in Nairobi insisting that he was in charge of the bankrupt administration.

## Man charged with Oklahoma bombing 'had Klan links'

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

TIMOTHY McVEIGH, in the most detailed account of his alleged role in the Oklahoma City bombing, has told his lawyers that his harsh anti-government sentiments first found expression as a member of the Ku-Klux-Klan.

A fortnight before his trial opens in Denver, the chief suspect in America's worst act of terrorism is reported to have told his defence team that he joined the white supremacist organisation in 1992 shortly after being discharged from the army.

Based on statements given to the lawyers, the *New York*

*Post* said yesterday that three years later and five days before his 27th birthday, Mr McVeigh drove a yellow Ryder van packed with explosives to Oklahoma City.

The next day he parked the van outside the Alfred Murrah building and detonated the device. The explosion ripped through the federal building, killing 168 adults and children and injuring more than 500 people in the vicinity.

The latest account of Mr McVeigh's involvement comes after a series of reported "confessions" in the *Dallas*

*Morning News* and *Playboy* which resulted in demands by his lawyers that the trial should be postponed and moved to another venue. They said it would be impossible to select a fair jury in the circumstances.

Richard Matsch, the judge trying the case, ruled that jury selection will start in Denver as planned on Easter Monday despite an almost daily crop of articles which have done little to convince America that either Mr McVeigh, or his co-defendant, Terry Nichols, can hope for a non-partisan panel of potential jurors.

## Cartoon attracts Asian-American fire

FROM QUENTIN LETTIS IN NEW YORK

A CONFIDANT of Baroness Thatcher has been accused of anti-Asian racism after he published a magazine cartoon lampooning President Clinton's links to Chinese money.

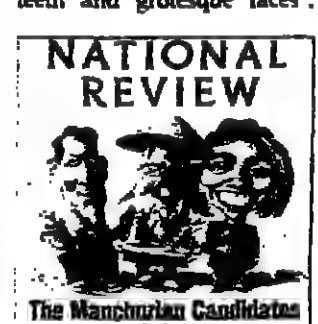
John O'Sullivan, an expatriate British journalist who helped the former Prime Minister with her memoirs and who now edits the right-of-centre *New York* magazine *National Review*, commissioned a front-cover illustration for his publication's latest issue.

The cartoon promoted an article about the Clinton Administration's ill-fated involvements with Asian supporters such as John Huang, James Riady and

officials from Beijing. It depicted a toothy Mr Clinton in a Chinese farmer's hat, holding a tray of tea, beside a Mrs Clinton dressed as Madame Mao. Vice-President Al Gore, who has been accused of illegally accepting political donations at a Buddhist temple, appeared in the cartoon as a monk, holding a tin of cash. The caption read: *The Manchurian Candidates*.

Asian-American pressure groups saw an outrageous slur. Their reaction says much for the way some Asian-Americans would like the White House donations scandal to go: towards victimhood. The National Asian Pacific Legal Consortium, a lobbying

outfit which can perhaps be described as a garlic and ginger group, attacked the cartoon as "incredibly offensive", pointing to its "buck-teeth and grotesque faces".



The cover: "no chance of an apology"

Daphne Kwok, director of the Organisation of Chinese Americans, demanded an apology from Mr O'Sullivan and his publisher, the veteran right-wing campaigner William Buckley.

"We find the cover extremely offensive and racist," said Ms Kwok. "There's an inability to distinguish between Asians and Asian-Americans, foreigners and US citizens. It is reminiscent of the caricature made of the Chinese in the 1800s."

The Asian-American Journalists' Association said that with the tea tray *National Review* had portrayed "Asians as servants of America". The Asian-American Legal De-

fence and Education Fund insisted that the cartoon suggested that Chinese Communists "were brainwashing Washington".

Mr O'Sullivan reacted to the criticism with a zest which Lady Thatcher might recognise. "They have not a snowball's chance in hell of an apology," he called the charges "vile and slanderous" and detected "an orchestrated campaign by the Ethnic Grievance Industry".

The magazine has received many angry letters, said Mr O'Sullivan. He added: "The cover was a fine example of the political caricature that has been a glory of American debate since Thomas Nast."

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## Australia offers Papua its own army trainers in place of £20m hired soldiers

# Mercenaries' contract is suspended to halt riots

FROM NOEL PASCOE IN PORT MORESBY AND ROGER MAYNARD IN SYDNEY

PORT MORESBY, the capital of Papua New Guinea, yesterday slid towards anarchy with rioting and looting while Sir Julius Chan, the Prime Minister, last night sought to ease tensions by suspending the reported £20 million contract with a British mercenary force.

One looter was decapitated when he was tackled by a knife-wielding security guard, and two people were injured as army and police fired on each other.

Hooligans, meanwhile, took advantage of the unrest to carry away the contents of a supermarket; they then took refuge in a downtown barracks when police and military confronted them and fired teargas and live ammunition into the air to make them withdraw.

Sir Julius said the contract would be suspended until allegations of corruption were investigated in an agreement which Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok — the sacked

Defence Force commander — said could eventually cost the state £75 million.

The Australian Government urged an end to the mercenary contract and offered to replace the security firm, Sandline International, with an Australian Army force of trainers, according to diplomatic sources.

A number of the British mercenaries have left Papua New Guinea over the past few days, and Tim Spicer, the Sandline chief executive, was freed from four days' arrest in a Port Moresby barracks.

Two men, one of them said to be a relative of Sir Julius, were arrested near the barracks. One was said to be armed with a 9mm German pistol with two magazines of ammunition, the other was said to have a loaded and cocked pistol in his possession.

Sources said the second man was employed by Network International, a firm linked to the Prime Minister's family. British diplomats in Port



Looters run from a Port Moresby supermarket after police and the military had fired teargas and live ammunition to scare them off

Moresby were still trying to make contact with a second executive of Sandline, said Brian Baldwin, the British Deputy High Commissioner. The intervention of the British High Commission follows concern by executives of Sandline International in London for the safety of their men. Mr Spicer, a former lieutenant-colonel in the Scots Guards, has extensive military experience in the Falklands, Bosnia, Cyprus, the Gulf War and Northern Ireland, for which he was awarded an OBE.

"We know Spicer was being held by some of the Papua New Guinea defence forces who remain loyal to the previous commander, Brigadier-

General Jerry Singirok," Mr Baldwin explained. "But that's as far as we have got. We have not been able to make any progress in getting hold of him and talking to him."

At least five soldiers were seriously injured in the rioting, which prompted junior ranks to try to gain entry to a nearby weapons arsenal. But they were prevented from doing so by other officers.

A petition signed by more than 4,700 soldiers — almost the whole army — demanded the immediate reinstatement of General Singirok, who was sacked for the mercenaries. The general is urging the expulsion of the mercenaries. The general is urging a political solution to the crisis and says that he will accept his sacking

as long as it is proven to be legal and constitutional.

Papua New Guinea is not a banana republic," he said. "It has a democracy and a constitution." He said he began his revolt because the mercenaries were about to launch a "military onslaught" on copper-rich Bougainville, 560 miles northeast of the capital.

General Singirok told a press conference that the contract with the mercenaries had been pushed against his advice and that of department heads. He said that one of the reasons he had not agreed with the contract was because of the "historical performance of Sandline and Executive Outcomes" in Third World countries. He could not under-

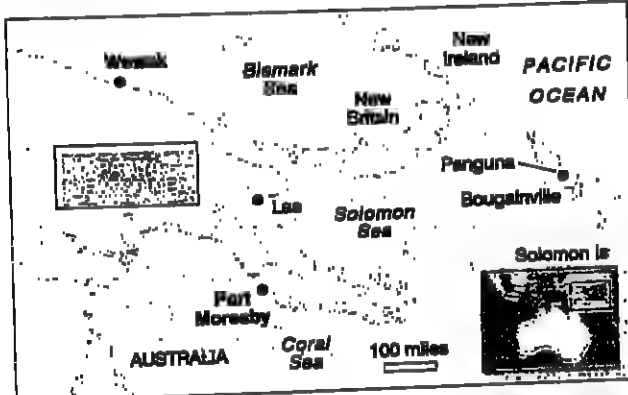
stand how the Government could spend so much money on an international company with "serious credibility problems".

They were hired, he said, at a cost of nearly £20 million to help to end the secessionist conflict on Bougainville which has been waged for the past nine years.

What happens next may well depend on a demonstration by military opponents of the Prime Minister. The scale of the protest, which has been planned to take place this morning, will provide a guide to the level of continuing opposition to Sir Julius, whose position has been severely undermined by the events of the past few days.



Singirok petition demands his return



## Macau cyanide alert after river accident on Chinese border

FROM JONATHAN MITSKY IN HONG KONG

A LORRY loaded with 200 drums of sodium cyanide, used in electroplating, skidded into the West River which feeds into the Pearl River delta in Guangdong province.

The people of Macau, fearing pollution, were drinking bottled water last night. In the Portuguese colony and in Hong Kong, produce from across the border in China was being scrutinised.

At first it was reported that ten drums, each weighing

50 kg, had burst and several were missing. Authorities in Wuzhou, the town on the Guangdong-Guangxi border where the spillage occurred, now say all the drums have been recovered and only one had burst. Chinese authorities tend to minimise the scale of serious accidents.

The West River flows into the Pearl from which Macau draws much of its drinking water. By now this would have shown cyanide traces

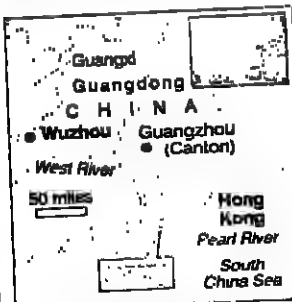
0.6 grams of cyanide are lethal. Hong Kong's water comes from a different branch of the Pearl, which does not take in West River water.

The delta is also the source of many of the vegetables and shellfish imported into Macau and Hong Kong. In Macau, health officials say the local reservoirs are safe, but sales of bottled water have doubled.

Although the Chinese authorities insist they alerted residents along the West River and ordered police to warn against using the water, reporters say that local people either did not know of the danger or were ignoring it, continuing to draw drinking water from it, washing their clothes along its banks and fishing.

Fisherman said that if the fish had been affected they would have floated to the surface.

Officials in Wuzhou said the water there contained only safe traces of cyanide.



## Cuba offer to Lima guerrillas

BY GABRIELLA GAMINI SOUTH AMERICA CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT Castro of Cuba has offered political asylum to the 18 Marxist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement rebels holding 72 hostages at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima, the Peruvian capital.

The offer came yesterday after Senor Castro met a Japanese government envoy who appears to have sought his help to try to solve the 94-day siege. Masahiko Kamura, the Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister, arrived in Havana on Wednesday with a letter from Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Japanese Prime Minister.

Earlier in the week Mr Kamura had visited Lima, where negotiations between the hostage-takers and Peru's Government remained at a stalemate amid heightening concerns over the hostages' health.

Senor Castro yesterday said he hoped his offer would "speed up" negotiations to end the crisis. But the guerrillas have so far rejected various "safe passage" offers. Their leader, Nestor Cerrpa Cartolini, 45, has also reiterated the rebels' demand for the release of more than 400 comrades currently in Peruvian jails. Peru's President Fujimori has said all along that he would never accede to the rebels' demands.

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## Helicopter gunships shadow dawn mission across mountains to answer SOS

## Secret operation by special forces rescues orphans

WHAT ended in the dramatic special forces rescue of the staff and children of a beleaguered British-run orphanage in southern Albania began for me with a strange phone call on Wednesday evening. As I ate supper in a hotel in Tirana a waitress handed me a mobile phone. The voice on the other end was that of a British major I had met in the army ten years ago.

"Hello," he said, "have you got a car and might you be able to drive it for us?" I said I would see what I could do.

There were several problems. First I had no car and would have to acquire one — difficult as it was curfew in a capital already tense after the unrest of the past two weeks. A loyal friend asked few questions and instead gave me the keys and documents to her



Anthony Loyd reports how he left Tirana in a borrowed car to help to save 22 children at a British-run orphanage

rented Hertz car, a four-door Volvo.

Two men appeared in the foyer cradling holdalls and dressed in civilian clothes, and after picking up a couple more men, we arrived at the British Embassy. "Got life insurance, have you?" asked one soldier grinning. It was about all I had got — even the Volvo's fuel tank was as good as empty.

The group introduced themselves by their first names and the major explained the problem. I had guessed the logistical situation must have

been fairly desperate if they needed to call in a journalist with a borrowed car, but I could never have guessed how fraught with difficulties their mission was.

In the last three days the situation in southern and eastern Albania had deteriorated rapidly. Following an ultimatum by rebels for President Berisha to resign by yesterday or face possible attack in Tirana, many provincial towns, some of them previously untouched by violence, became torn by gangland fights.

In Elbasan, 38 miles south of Tirana, the situation had become especially bad. The vendetta killing of a youth in the town on Tuesday had acted as a catalyst for escalating violence in which the police, equipped with tanks and apparently loyal to no outside authority, joined an interethnic fight among local mafia gangs whose arsenal had been supplemented with captured military weapons.

There was an orphanage for 22 Albanian children in the centre of it all, run by a British couple, Mike and Judy Smith, together with a Dutch lady Joanda Van Sloten and a small Albanian staff. The orphans included victims of child abuse and the abandoned offspring of prostitutes and emigrants. The eldest child was eight years old, the youngest, three months.

Though the Smiths, who have been in Albania for four years, had last week rejected

the offer of evacuation — as they wanted to remain with their charges — the sudden worsening of the situation made their position untenable. By Wednesday evening the town was degenerating into anarchy, with bullets from gun battles striking the orphanage walls. The Smiths rang the British Embassy in Tirana at 8.30pm and asked for help.

The mission was cleared by London, leaving the tiny group of British soldiers in the embassy with the unenviable task of getting into Elbasan by dawn, and out again safely to Tirana with 22 children, three expatriate staff and four Albanian girls. The troops had two vehicles at their disposal, a Land Rover and a mini-bus: hence the need for the rented Volvo.

We were to go in at dawn in the three cars, reach the orphanage, fill our vehicles

and two additional ones owned by the Smiths with the staff and children, and drive out again for the 90-minute journey back through the contested zone to Tirana. Two British Chinook helicopters,

Although the stakes still appeared to be enormous, there was simply no alternative

converted to gunships, waited among hills near Elbasan as a Quick Reaction Force to deal with any opposition and to airlift us out if the road option failed. Although the stakes seemed enormous, there was

no alternative: the clock was ticking against the orphans' fortunes.

A soldier took me aside and briefed me on the use of their weapons and equipment, which I remembered from my army service, in case push came to shove.

We departed at 5am. "If I buy it, for God's sake tell my wife I never loved her," one of the soldiers joked as we moved off, snaking southwards into the darkness along a crumbling road that climbed through dense fog and forest. At one point, a large Albanian police convoy emerged through the murk towards us. But it passed us without incident. As dawn shed its first light we broke through the mist. Elbasan lay beneath us in a waterlogged valley.

The early hour, driving rain and cold had lent us advantage. Yet as we entered the town, the veneer of peace was

punctured by the sight of tanks marked "Police", stationed at road junctions on the empty streets; and soon the distant sound of automatic fire ripped into the quiet.

"You people certainly get some jobs," said Judy Smith as we backed the vehicles into the orphanage's courtyard and the troops, jackets concealing chest webbing, moved off to guard the building. Tiny figures walked out into the daylight, grinning at the newly arrived men as the staff flustered around them pulling jackets over children's obstinate arms.

"It's got worse and worse here," Judy Smith added. "It began last week and then, quietened until two days ago when the fighting started again. Bullets have been spraying around us."

With minimal fuss the children and staff were loaded into the vehicles. We pulled out of

the gates, now a convoy of five, and headed back out of the wakening town before its people realised the presence of the strangers among them.

I turned to look past the soldier beside me at the back-seat of the Volvo: four small faces met my gaze, the arm of a young Albanian child mind-er around their shoulders. None of them looked back at the town.

The helicopters shadowed our route, finally lifting away as we entered Tirana. The embassy road was as deserted as when we left it little over three hours previously.

"Smooth one," a soldier said, as the major entered the room. Another trooper entered looking worried. "Er, Boss," he said. "Two of those kids upstairs... they need their nappies changing."

Leading article and letters, page 21

## Children are 'last Britons to leave'

By ANTHONY LOYD

BRITISH special forces backed by helicopters yesterday mounted a successful operation to snatch 29 children and staff from an orphanage in southern Albania that was in danger of being overwhelmed by fighting as the region slid into a new wave of interethnic conflict.

Though they had originally rejected an offer by the British Embassy to evacuate them last week, Mike and Judy Smith, the two 61-year-old Britons running the House of Hope, were forced by the revived level of conflict to request evacuation on Wednesday evening. They said

that gunfire was hitting the stone building and threatening the lives of the children.

The Smiths and their charges were at a safe house near the embassy last night recovering from the ordeal, and awaiting confirmation of asylum in Britain, which they insist shall be only until the rebellion ends and they can return to Elbasan.

"This now completes the operation for the evacuation of British, Irish and Commonwealth nationals who want to leave Albania," said Captain Graham Wiltshire, temporary British defence attaché to Tirana.

## 'Nuclear material smuggled to Italy in refugee exodus'

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

PIER LUIGI VIGNA, Italy's top anti-Mafia prosecutor, yesterday held a summit in Bari of police chiefs from the main southern towns on how to tackle the crime wave which has followed the influx of well over 10,000 Albanian refugees, including the reported smuggling of radioactive material from Albania for sale on the "black" arms market.

Officials said ten "containers of radioactive material" had been stolen last Sunday by Albanians looting a "military-related installation" — believed to be an arms factory — at Fier, near Tirana. Officials declined to confirm that the smuggled consignment consisted of uranium or weapons-grade plutonium. "But we are not talking about radioactive waste," one official said.

Gazetta del Sud, published in Calabria, quoted Italian secret service sources as saying the missing radioactive material was "in the Otranto area", and had been smuggled in on one of the commandeered Albanian naval vessels that have arrived in southern Italy in the past week. The report said the material was "very dangerous" if not han-

dled properly. Gazetta del Mezzogiorno, published in Bari, said the nuclear material had been smuggled by Albanian gangsters, who had a track record of smuggling with the Italian Mafia.

In November last year, police at Brindisi intercepted a boat from Albania and seized four kilograms of liquid mercury, apparently designed for weapons manufacture. In June 1995, a ship with uranium on board was reported to have sunk near Otranto, and the Finance Police seized a consignment



Vigna: crisis talks on growing crime wave

of white mercury from a Vlore-registered ship. Refugees at Bari said that they had seen Italian mafiosi buying Kalashnikovs and other weapons from Albanians.

A police spokesman in Lecce said southern Italian ports had become a "gateway to Europe" for smuggled goods. "We have tried to raise the alarm, but no one listens. They will listen when it's too late," he said. The spokesman said high-quality cannabis was being grown for export in greenhouses near Vlore.

"So much marijuana has arrived in Italy in the past few days that the street price has dropped dramatically," he said. "There is also a huge trade in human beings. Many of the Albanian women coming to Italy end up as prostitutes under Mafia control."

Meanwhile, the Italian Foreign Ministry denied reports that Paolo Foresti, the Ambassador to Tirana for the past three years, was about to be replaced. A spokesman said Signor Foresti had been appointed Italy's Ambassador to the Western European Union (WEU), but would remain in Tirana until the present crisis was resolved.

## Ministers ask EU for \$210m

FROM TOM WALKER IN TIRANA

ALBANIA'S new Government has asked the European Union for \$150 million (£94 million) to help to ease its balance of payments deficit. Ministry of Finance officials in the country said yesterday. It also wants \$60 million to begin reconstructing its shattered tax, finance and customs structure.

The country is virtually incapable of raising any money. There are no customs offices — so trucks that manage to cross the border pay no tax — and mechanisms for taxing the population have all but disappeared.

The sources also had some bad news for southern rebels in Gjirokaster, who two days ago stole the state treasury safe but have been unable to dynamite it open. "I'm afraid it's empty," said an official.

There was relative calm in Tirana, the capital, yesterday, and a deadline set by the rebels for the resignation of President Berisha passed without comment. The rebels, led by Agim Gaxhuta, a former army general, will meet today in Tepelene to discuss their next move.

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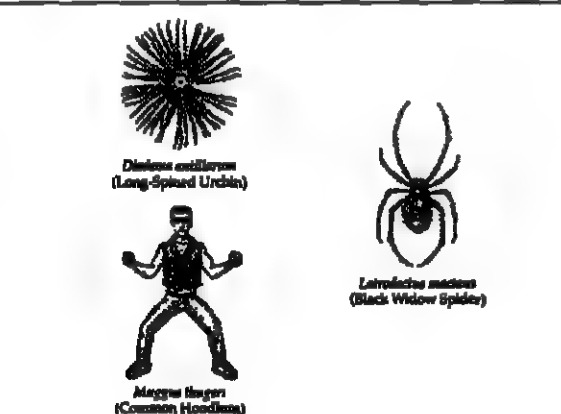
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If you can't talk about interior design, you're a nobody, says Joe Joseph

## Forget sun-dried tomatoes, the new big thing is decorating

We all know the feeling, because if it hasn't already happened to you, it has almost certainly happened to someone you know. You come home and open the front door to be confronted by that chilling vision of rooms which have been stripped bare: not a TV set or video recorder left; no furniture; all your favourite knick-knacks gone; they've even taken the carpets. And then the icy truth dawns. An interior decorator has been in your flat. You have become a minimalist.

But if you don't like the look, don't worry. Unless you are Ranulph Fiennes and are feeling homesick for the South Pole, there is no compulsion to paint and upholster absolutely everything in white. You don't

have to stick with minimalism any more than you have to stick with wearing only Versace or Karen every day. If tomorrow you want to switch to "Moroccan ethnic", there are a dozen books to advise you how to magic up the mood of Marrakesh in Morden.

Food? Oh, forget it. Stop flying to Tuscany every weekend to buy rare farmhouse olive oil that nobody else has heard of. The world has turned. Well-off thirty-somethings who already own 12 Armani suits, a Bulthaup kitchen, have memorised the *River Café Cookbook* and own a larder full of ingredients they can't pronounce without taking Berlitz classes, have found a new craze they can whine about over dinner and spend their bonuses on: decorating.

Go take a look in your local

Waterstone's: it has been turned over to decorating manuals. The Conran Shop in London brings every Saturday morning with people who were weaned on *The Face* and *ID*: these people not only know the difference between Jasper Morrison and Tom Dixon, they care.

Whenever a shop site has fallen vacant over the past few years in chi-chi Notting Hill, in west London, a fancy boutique has opened the next morning. But the noisiest arrivals have been shops selling expensive modern furniture.

Once we were grateful for those sensible decorating tips you got from *Reader's Digest* (Example: "Don't scumble in public — it's rude"). Later, *World of Interiors* and *Elle Decoration* provided ideas for enthusiastic do-it-yourselfers

and voyeuristic entertainment for armchair decorators; then a few months ago the magazine *Wallpaper* — subtitled *The Modern Homemaker* — entered our lives, edited by the tastefully named Canadian style journalist Tyler Brülé.

Brülé, long-time partner of the shoe designer Patrick Cox, says interior design is being taken more seriously because people aren't looking at property as a way of making a quick buck but as the cocoon in which they will be spending the next decade of their lives. His target market is women, gay men and rich City types, but the fascination with interiors has spread far, far wider.

We are all interior decorators now. So what if some new shop in Brewer Street sells the best prosciutto in England? Just tell us who hand-mixed

that authentic 18th-century emulsion in your hall.

Decorating is suddenly hipper than sex — and by decorating we don't mean putting up bookshelves you bought from Homebase. We mean a carefully thought-out room plan that makes a nod to Mies van der Rohe, but is at the same time undercut with a hint of knowing irony — the sort that says "Hey, I know God is in the details, so when I invite people over to dinner I tell people what shade of sofa they will be sitting on so that all the colours don't jar."

Today we measure out our lives not in coffee spoons but in Arne Jacobsen "Ant" chairs. The coolest interiors in London and Manchester and Glasgow have become so played with Day-Glo coloured Ant chairs that when the backlash comes we will need to bring in Remotokil to deal with the infestation.

You find Modernism too bleak? There's room for you, too. Experiment with traditionally made paints. This week the specialist paint-maker Farrow & Ball launched a new collection of striped wallpapers in all the 95 colours from its National Trust and Archive paint ranges (using run-of-the-mill Dulux emulsion is like still using dried tomatoes in the kitchen). The new wallpapers are produced in "the traditional 19th-century way" and cost £26.95 a roll.

Apart from all the new decorating books, the surest sign that interior decorating has supplanted food as Britain's newest armchair hobby are the TV programmes devoted to the subject. BBC 2's *Home Front* draws audiences

of four million. It has been joined by *Changing Rooms* — a cross between *Blind Date* and *Canada Camera*, in which people redecorate their neighbour's house with the help of an interior designer.

In the pipeline for May is *Real Rooms*, on BBC1: decorating hit squads descend on a house and give it a makeover. You still think interior decorating is just for the rich or the effete? Then look out for *Challenge Chiggers*, a programme scheduled to go out on BBC1 at 9.20am every morning from this autumn. In this, Keith Chegwin and his band of decorators and gardeners will descend on an unsuspecting street every week and give it a facelift.

What next? Probably Bruce Forsyth competing a game show in which celebrities (Ulrika Jonsson, Ben Elton, Sir George Solti) take on DIY experts to answer such questions as: "Starck is the name of what, (a) a French designer, (b) a German minimalist art movement, or (c) a wax used to lime oak?"

But don't rush ahead blindly. There's no point spending thousands rearranging your house only to find yourself

falling sick because you have put everything in an inauspicious place. Consult a feng shui expert first.

Feng shui is an oriental system of arranging furniture so as to improve your chances of being healthy, happy and rich. Big in America — Donald Trump uses it. The reason you haven't heard about it already is that you have been positioned in the wrong place — namely Europe.

For those of you who have not realised that a trend has been growing around your feet, here are some decorating tips gleaned from the latest manuals to get you over the initial bump of ignorance at your next dinner party.

Tribal is fashionable right now, but be careful: a person who is convinced he is living in a Victorian terrace house in Fulham will be upset to find that his neighbour's house has been turned into something homely enough for a family of Massi tribesmen.

Don't let toddlers dictate your decor, unless you are prepared to live with walls in a wipe-clean orangey-brown and a flecked carpet that already looks as if it is studded with squashed raisins.

Study kitchen design books and then yourself: can I count

- *Paint* by John Sutcliffe, (Frances Lincoln £25)
- *Paper Magic* by Jane Gordon-Clark, (Frances Lincoln £18.95)
- *Decorating Magic* by John Sutcliffe, (Frances Lincoln £18.95)
- *Paint Magic* by Jocasta Innes, (Frances Lincoln £20)
- *Instant Decorating* by Stewart Walton and Elizabeth Wilhide, (Conran Octopus £10.99)
- *The New Apartment Book* by Michele Michael, (Aurum £16.95)
- *The Ultimate Interior Designer* by Ruth Pretty, (Cassel £20)
- *Decorating Entrances, Stairways and*

- Landings* by Susan Berry, (Cassel £12.99)
- *The Art of Kitchen Design* by Johnny Grey, (Cassel £18.99)
- *Kevin McClelland's Decorating Book*, (Dorling Kindersley £22.50)
- *The Complete Home Decorating Book* by Nicholas Barnard, (Dorling Kindersley £19.99)
- *Modern House* by John Welsh, (Phaidon £40)
- *Trade Secrets: Jocasta Innes*, (Phoenix £12.99)
- *Painted Furniture: Jocasta Innes*, (Mitchell Beasley £14.99)
- *California Cottages* by Diane Dorrans Sacks, (Chronicle Books £22.99)

- Justin Meath Baker and Christopher Neville, working as Baker Neville — just completed Cobden Dining Club
- Claire Nelson — restaurant and domestic interior design, recognised for her gilded surfaces
- Jenny Armit — exquisite taste
- Charles Rutherford — one of new breed who combines architecture, design and decoration
- Mary Fox Listen — exceptionally experienced
- Emily Todhunter — popular here and abroad
- Kelly Hoppen — popularised smart ethnic
- Malcolm Beckett — Soho-style loft designer

- Chunky 50s coloured glassware
- Anything by Charles Eames, eg, butterfly chair, Vola taps, cutlery (must be the real thing)
- SMEG American stainless steel fridges
- Donna Karan scented candles
- Large fish tanks containing tropical fish and lighting
- Tom Dixon furniture and lighting
- Electric "Hampton Beach-style" bar blenders
- Gucci alarm clocks
- American electric juicers
- Muji Japanese storage containers in cardboard or plastic
- Fake suede or animal skin, especially zebra
- Anything in brightly coloured felt

- Purves & Purves, 80, 81 & 83 Tottenham Court Road, W1 (0171-580 8224)
- Space, 214 Westbourne Grove, W11 (0171-229 6533)
- Tota Tota Furniture, 42 New Compton St, WC2 (0171-240 7809)
- Aram Design, 3 Kean St, WC2 (0171-240 3933)
- 20th Century Designs, 214 Upper St, N1 (0171-288 1996)
- Vinduet, 1 Summers St, EC1 (0171-278 9458)
- Mathmos, 179 Dury Lane, WC2 (0171-404-6605)

- Egg, 36 Kimmerton St, SW1 (0171-235 9313)
- Conrads, 33-35 Little Clarendon St, Oxford (01865 311141)
- Nick House, 83A Canale Regis, Glasgow (0141-248 1373)
- Lloyd Davies, 14 John Dalton St, Manchester (01606 77277)
- Both Calvin Klein and Prada are planning to open homeware shops in the UK before the end of this year.

Compiled by Celia Goodrich-Clarke

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'It's cheaper to keep your old decor and drink a lot instead'

of four million. It has been joined by *Changing Rooms* — a cross between *Blind Date* and *Canada Camera*, in which people redecorate their neighbour's house with the help of an interior designer.

In the pipeline for May is *Real Rooms*, on BBC1: decorating hit squads descend on a house and give it a makeover. You still think interior decorating is just for the rich or the effete? Then look out for *Challenge Chiggers*, a programme scheduled to go out on BBC1 at 9.20am every morning from this autumn. In this, Keith Chegwin and his band of decorators and gardeners will descend on an unsuspecting street every week and give it a facelift.

What next? Probably Bruce Forsyth competing a game show in which celebrities (Ulrika Jonsson, Ben Elton, Sir George Solti) take on DIY experts to answer such questions as: "Starck is the name of what, (a) a French designer, (b) a German minimalist art movement, or (c) a wax used to lime oak?"

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# Writing poetry into Ireland's history

Roy Foster is the first Professor of Irish History at Oxford and the biographer of W.B. Yeats who, he says, is the voice of Ireland's cultural consciousness coming to maturity

I am slightly surprised that English people GET Yeats as much as they do," Professor Roy Foster muses. "And indeed that Americans do so at all. Didn't Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep plough their truth with lines from Yeats in *The Bridges of Madison County*?"

We all love Yeats. In the BBC's ballot to find the nation's favourite poems, he was the only poet mentioned twice — beating Wordsworth, Kipling, Tennyson — with "I will arise and go now" and "Tread softly because you tread on my dreams". As a nation we fanatically respond to yearning wistfulness.

We like being reminded that a pity beyond all telling is hid in the heart of love, that our well-loved's hair has threads of grey, that one should never give all the heart, that the world's more full of weeping than a child can understand. And if we prefer to hear such sentiments recited in the Irish tongue, it is largely thanks to Yeats's genius in reinventing, and making culturally fashionable, a mythic, blood-mantling Celtic twilight world of faery, where mouse-grey waters flow, where Cuchulainn, Fergus and Aengus, and other heroes, banshees and revenants danced.

This makes Yeats a tricky subject, especially for an historian. "Yeats inspired passionately. Everyone feels they own a bit of him, that he means something special to them."

But to me he is an inseparable part of the era of Irish history I am most interested in, 1865 to 1939. Yeats is one of the great actors in Irish history; the voice of Irish cultural consciousness coming to maturity.

Oxford's first Professor of Irish History — "the delicious Roy Foster" as his publisher calls him — is 48, tall and lean, green-eyed, floppy-haired, with a mellifluous voice. I asked a Southern Belle with a fine sense of male allure how she rated Roy Foster. "On a scale of one to ten," she said, "batting her eyelashes, 'about fifty'."

I found him at Hertford College, in a stage set of a don's study, spilling over with books. Sunk into an armchair by the fire was another Irish poet and fellow Fellow, Tom Paulin, who was about to give a class on *Samson Agonistes*, and what were they discussing? Liam and Noel Gallagher, Danny Baker and Chris Evans. (Paulin, without irony, drawled of Baker and Evans:

"Those accents — I can't stand them." They also grumbled about John Carey's review of Foster's book — but was there ever dog that praised his fleas? Anyway, other critics have called it magisterial, magnificent, "a master work" and other superlatives.

Foster's predecessor as Yeats's biographer, F.S.L. Lyons, spent ten years preparing to write, sat down at his desk and immediately collapsed and died. When the Yeats family asked Foster to take it on, ten years ago, Foster was in the throes of writing his *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*. Friends advised him "don't do it, don't shackle yourself to a great man". He might toil for years, and never do anything else. But Foster was undaunted by the vastness of the enterprise,

the archive dispersed in libraries across America, the prospect of unravelling the multiple levels on which Yeats lived. Foster embodies the Irish mind at its quickest: he is a vivid reporter and a witty reviewer. Nobody writes more eloquently on the two countries separated by the Irish Sea and divided by their common language. Last week,

and he was in Dublin, judging the Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize for Anglo-Irish understanding.

How Irish is he? He bristles at this "dangerous" question. "Being asked 'If you're a Protestant, are you completely Irish?' is exactly what Yeats had to contend with."

The answer is that Foster, like Yeats, is as Irish as can be. He was the only son (with three sisters) of schoolteachers at a progressive Quaker school, Newtown, in Waterford. His father has never been to England. At 17 Robert Fitzroy Foster, known as Roy, left this Jack Yeats landscape ("raggy faces outlined against wild Atlantic skies") and went to Baltimore on a Ford scholarship.

He wanted to stay in America, but his parents hauled him home to Trinity College Dublin. "I probably would have become a hopeless acid-head — or been tear-gassed, as I was a peacenik, and it was 1966. Trinity was not so politicised. Though I did throw a bag of flour at the Queen of the Belgians' car." (It missed.)

He might also have been brain-drained like other historians (Simon Schama, David Cannadine) who have found academic celebrity in America. Instead, he ferched up at Birkbeck College, London, where he stayed 17 years



"Yeats was presented to me, as to most Irish people, as this grand panjandrum figure, walking the Dublin streets in his cloak as my parents saw him when they were students"

and ran the history department until, encouraged by his mentor the late historian Angus Macintyre, he arrived in Oxford in 1991. He would have left Birkbeck for nothing less than this pioneering chair.

Yeats himself was captivated by Oxford, when he went to translate Aeschylus's fables in the Bodleian for £5, subsisting on currant buns. "I wonder anybody does anything at Oxford but dream... the place is so beautiful. One almost expects the people to sing instead of speaking. It is... like an opera," he wrote. Foster feels much the same. He can gaze enraptured by moonlight on the Radcliffe Camera and the Bodleian at his door. It certainly beats Kenilworth, where he commutes weekly, and where his wife Aisling (now writing her second novel) lives with their children Phineas and Nora.

Yeats, born into the declining Protestant bourgeoisie with a cold, sad mother, and painter father, grew up in the artistic milieu of suburban Bedford Park, with its de Morgan tiles and aesthetically correct flowers. Foster brilliantly

paints this fin-de-siècle background canvas. Here young WB was a sucker for any occult nonsense, astrology, spiritualism, seances, theosophy, necromancy. But through plundering arcane ideas he cultivated his sense of the poetic.

He also developed his own style — the black velvet coat, the arty pose — into the dramatic figure in the famous portrait, which Daniel Day-Lewis uncannily resembles.

"It surprised me that he lived more in England than in Ireland: he spent more time near Euston station than he did at Coole Park," (Foster wandered by the lake at Coole with Andrew Motion, the poet: there were no wild swans about.) In Woburn Buildings, the undomesticated Yeats turned a modest flat into a salon. Though his own entertaining facilities were "limited by his cutlery", Yeats became quite grand and dined with Churchill.

"Yeats was presented to me, as to most Irish people, as this grand panjandrum figure, walking the Dublin streets in his cloak, as my parents saw him when they were students in the late Thirties. Greatness hung about him. He died surrounded by this image, and by that too much quoted Auden poem about him being 'silly like us'. But I followed his childhood to the engaging and sometimes scatty young man; you gather the humour and passion and quickness that's there, under the carapace of greatness."

Last night's *Night Waves* on Radio 3 featured a recording of Yeats reading, in a portentously rolling monotone, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* ("that unfortunate poem" as Leavis called it). Yeats was forever haunted by the popularity of the over-anthologised poem, which had been inspired by

thoughts of Sligo — where his wealthy grandparents, the Pollexfens, lived — while looking into a shop window in the Strand. The earliest version is misspelt and does not scan, but Foster regards the process by which the poem reached its "shimmering perfection" as outside his historical brief.

"I am not trained to do it. Brilliant critics from Ellmann to Donoghue to Deane have scrutinised the poems. In any case, I love Yeats's prose, its cadence and modulation and brilliance."

In his deconstruction of Yeats's life, there are many hilarious moments. Foster gives a first airing to a limerick, found in the archive at Austin, Texas, by Oliver St John Gogarty about poor little rich girl Miss Annie Horniman, the tea heiress, who fruitlessly pursued Willie Yeats, who "in any case isn't a horny man". Yeats was a late developer, still unmarried at 49 when this volume ends. But his affairs with women who tended to be unattainable — Maud Gonne, Florence Farr, Olivia Shakespeare — and the productive, non-sexual

friendship with Lady Gregory, amounted in Foster's view to "a good career decision".

Yeats, Foster says, could not but be enthralled by bronze-haired, Valkyrian Maud Gonne. Foster did not expect to like Maud: "A Shelleyan *princesse fatale*, equipped with great height, tragic beauty and secret sorrows. But I became sympathetic to her because of her awful life: I love her style, and her letters. Though no doubt she could drive you mad."

Our interview ended as a lucky female undergraduate arrived for a tutorial. Recalling how women flocked to the Yeats lectures of Dr Denis Donoghue, to hear the Irish voice, I inquired whether he was ever troubled by those accusations of sexual harassment to which Oxford is prone. "Certainly not! What an out-of-a-geous suggestion!" he cried. For the next volume, and to discover why should not old men be mad? we shall have to wait, ago, until 2000.

● W.B. Yeats A Life, OUP, £25

## THE VALERIE GROVE INTERVIEW



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'Don't do it; don't shackle yourself to a great man'

## When a princess grows up

Rachel Morris rereads the books of her childhood

LATELY I've begun to regret the effects of good children's literature. There's something about the books we loved between the ages of eight and 12 that ensures they're never forgotten. The book that changed my life when I was ten — and not necessarily for the best — was *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The terrible truth is that Sarah Crewe, the princess of the title, with her ladylike stoicism and her belief that goodness will be rewarded if only we don't make a fuss, is with me to this day — and serving me very badly in the competitive Nineties.

Sometimes I think I'd be better off with Fagin or Captain Hook as my exemplars. Wanting to reread a favourite childhood book is one of those trivial yet important reasons for having children. For years, bedtimes can be an excuse to reread *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and *The Family at One End Street*. I've been known to sit up long after the children have gone to sleep, reading their books all over again.

But the trouble with living your life according to the morals of a children's book — any children's book — is that children's books are simple and adult life is complicated. (It was at it again the other day: when some career decision required me to be brave, what image did I summon up? The face of Aslan from one of the *Narnia* books, with his most vicar-ish expression.) The other difficulty with these books is that they can still prompt us into the most romantic gestures. A friend of mine suddenly upped and left behind an unhappy love affair and a London career to become a primary school teacher in Devon. None of us could understand such a dramatic volte-face until I

remembered her favourite books when we first met, aged 11½ — the *Miss Read* stories: quiet tales of a village teacher from a bygone age. Children's books, like adult novels, can sometimes change your life.

These days my daughter reads to herself, but now that I've grown wise to the dangerous effects of some children's classics I worry about what's going on in the privacy of her bedroom. The other day I looked at the Brian Jacques books in which she's been

immersed. These literate and readable books are hugely bloodthirsty. A medieval abbey and a band of mice are forever struggling against the forces of evil. Death and villainy is alive on every page. Characters are made appealing — then killed before our eyes. But the message of these books — that you have to fight for what you want, that women cannot be passive, that loyalty and comradeship are the most important virtues — is as likely as anything to stand her in good stead 30 years from now.

Just so long as they don't encourage her to become a mercurial. In which case I shall regret not having given her *A Little Princess*.

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## Philip Howard



### Low jinks at Greyfriars: Bunter and the tuck-for-questions affair

It was end of term at Greyfriars, Westminster. So a spirit of holiday happiness had spread through the Remove. Some of the seniors (who were not coming back next term, having been literally "removed" from the school by their parents) had lost all sense of their position as prefects, and were singing: "Hark the Black Rod Ushers shout, 'One more day and we'll all be out.' And the juniors had gone wild with terminal excitement. They waved their handouts in the air to beat time as they squeaked and gibbered: "No more sleaze and no more stench. No more sitting on the hard back bench. No more Major, no more Blair. No more iniquity by the Chair."

"Bunter!" The Speaker's voice was not loud, but deep. It was heard distinctly by all ears in the Big School form-room: excepting, apparently, one pair of very fat ears. "BUNTER!" The Speaker's voice was much louder, and much deeper. Still Bunter did not reply. But, as if in answer to the Speaker, a sound came from the Fat Owl of the Chamber. Snore! Bunter generally snored when he slept. In the Remove dormitory, Bunter's deep snore was wont to rumble on through the night, like the unending melody in Lloyd Webber music — not perhaps quite so musical. So far he had not snored in class. Now he did! Though how he did in the uproar was a question for Old Stinks, the chemistry beak.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Speaker. "The boy is asleep! Skinner! Awake that boy." Skinner reached over to awaken him. Harry Greenway or Bob Hughes would have given the Fat Owl a shake. But Skinner was not a good-natured fellow. Skinner's method of awakening Bunter was to take a fat ear between finger and thumb, and pull. He took a good grip on Bunter's ear — there was plenty of room for it — and pulled.

It awakened the Honourable Member. It awakened him quite suddenly. Billy Bunter came out of the land of dreams with a jump and a yell. "Yaroooh! Owl! Leggo my ear, you beast! Wow! I say, you fellows — yow-ow. Owl! I say, Taint the division bell yet?" Bunter jerked his fat ear away from Skinner, rubbed it, and blinked round him dizzily, under the impression that he was in an armchair in the Members' smoking-room.

"Bunter!" thundered the Speaker. "You were asleep in class, Bunter. And you have not yet answered my tuck-for-questions prep." The Owl of the Remove blinked in terror. "I — I had my eyes shut, because — because I listen better with my eyes shut. I — I was listening very carefully, Madam Speaker. It was so — so interesting. And what was it that you said about tuck for questions?"

At the mention of the magic word "tuck", a fat smile twitched at the corners of Bunter's fleshy mouth. From there it spread slowly over his greasy face, as a spoonful of strawberry jam spreads out over semolina pudding. His eyes closed again in ecstasy, as he dreamt of plum jam and sardines, of lobster thermidor and *crème brûlée*. And of the phantom postal order that was always on its way to him in a plain brown envelope, but was said never actually to have arrived.

"Very well," said the Speaker in a grinding voice. "I was speaking on the subject of the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges. Tell me what you know of Harrods and the Paris Ritz. And about garden furniture from Peter Jones?" Bunter blinked. So far as his hazy memory served him, the Speaker had been droning about standards and the spirit of the old school when he nodded off to sleep. So why was he now blathering about the Ritz? A brainwave surged through his tiny mind. "Ritz? Biscuits sir. Like Hob-Nobs. And please sir, it's time for the prologation bell."

"If you say another word, Bunter, I shall cane you!" roared the Speaker. Bunter did not say another word. Things looked positively dangerous. "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove.

Boys may come and boys may go, at Westminster as well as in the other never-never land of Greyfriars. But human nature stays the same, from Bunter to Quelch. And the best joke of life is the banana-skin. The inability of the self-important to recognise their cosmic ridiculousness, in the long eye of history and literature.



## The grand inquisitor

Tony Blair has changed the tenor of Prime Minister's Questions — and we should scrutinise his high moral tone

How Prime Minister's Questions has changed! Sir Alec Douglas-Home: The Rt Hon Gentleman has discussed the question of the reunification of Germany. He will know, as we all do today, that a serious situation may possibly arise in Berlin. Will he keep the House informed in the next day or two about that?

Harold Wilson: "Yes, certainly."

Tony Blair: "Is it not extraordinary that the Prime Minister of our country cannot even urge his party to support his own position [on the single currency]?" Weak! Weak! Weak! I tell him that his weakness and his failure of leadership are the reason his Government are the incompetent mess they are."

John Major: "... All he does is wait his arms around in hopeless gesture... He has followed in Grandmother's Footsteps in following policy after policy of ours. [On Europe] he dare not admit what his policy is."

PMQs (as we press gallery nerds like to call them) have become the positioning flares of current affairs, marking out the path of political debate. If a future historian needed a handy guide to Westminster's focus during any given week, those quarter-hours each Tuesday and Thursday would be the place to start. Their content recalls the political agenda; their style captures the personal styles of the era's parliamentary stars. As surely as a couple of bars from an old pop song, their tone evokes the flavour of its time.

Since the arrival of broadcasting direct from the chamber, much of the electorate has come to believe that Question Time, particularly Prime Minister's Question Time, is the most significant thing that happens in our legislature. And if people think it significant, then significant it is, for politicians will reserve for the occasion those statements and gestures they want the electorate to notice. Strange, then, that the session has attracted so little study. Only Philip Norton and Mark Franklin have published at any length on the subject, editing the revealing collection *Parliamentary Questions*.

Despite the Gothic convolutions by which (via an inquiry about his engagements for the day) the Prime Minister is confronted with the question of the hour, this method of holding the Government to account is little more than a couple of decades old. But it is a fast-growing

plant, and many now assume that, like the fake architecture of Big Ben — so much newer than it looks — Prime Minister's Questions is part of the ancient fabric of our government. In reality it is still growing, still changing. PMQs as an institution has seen a huge gradual shift. During the 1960s there was far less posturing: the opportunity was often taken for genuine inquiry; questions would be transferred to a departmental minister if they were not strictly within the prime minister's remit. But Margaret Thatcher was willing to respond to any questions which (in her words) raised "issues of general substance and national interest". Meanwhile, increasing reliance on the "open" question left MPs free to raise the latest news. These days, they do little else. PMQs freeze-frames the topics and personalities of the hour.

Yesterday, Tony Blair squared up to John Major for the last time in this Parliament — perhaps the last time ever from their present positions. Reviewing the years in which Mr Blair has boxed from the Opposition corner, and comparing them with the years that went before, I find it hard to separate the impact of his own personality from the impact of the sound-bite politics that any modern Commons performer must learn.

I have been re-reading the old *Handards*. John Smith was gentler, as you would expect. It is more surprising to discover that Neil Kinnock, too, was often milder and less personal. Though sometimes roused to a fine and contemptuous moral fury, he was not, as Blair is, routinely indignant.

How much of this change arises from Blair's own political style, and how much from an underlying shift in the tenor of all Commons exchanges? The urgent attention that the modern media now focuses on short video clips from PMQs certainly favours homily over argument, gesture over explanation. So, (were they in his shoes today) would Alec

Douglas-Home or Jim Callaghan have expressed themselves in the sort of moral bark that Blair has made his own? Would they be as personal and as insulting? Would they so insistently imply superior virtue on their own part? Do all Opposition leaders now have to do this?

I have little doubt that Mr Blair has made his own contribution to this shift. Moralising comes naturally to him, as any scan through his chosen vocabulary will reveal. Key words such as "blame", "disgrace", "dishonour", "responsibility", "values", "rebirth" and "renewal" leap from his text as owing something — certainly — to the flavour of our times, but something, too, to his personal stamp. A phrase he used in February last year, describing John Major's Government as "knee-deep in dishonour", struck me not

because it so contrasted with the language we might expect, but because of the routine recourse the Labour leader has to extravagant imputations of personal wickedness in his opponents.

Along with his reflex tendency to question a rival's moral virtue goes a habit of questioning his moral fibre. The charge of weakness, cowardliness and irresolution comes quickly to Tony Blair's lips. He would retort that this is because his rival is weak, cowardly and irresolute — and certainly the charge, repeated so insistently from the Opposition dispatch box, has helped to cast John Major in that light. I suspect that with hindsight we may doubt whether the insistence with which Blair has questioned what might be called his opponent's manly qualities has been appropriate. It may have told us something about Mr Major, but I suspect it tells us more about Mr Blair.

Part of the problem for any leader of a "new" Labour Party, of course, is that there is now so little of substance to argue about. Whatever their instincts, the stated positions of the two parties are

remarkably close. Polly Toynbee speaks of the "by-election" mood in which this contest seems to be taking place, and she is right. A by-election is an opportunity to kick the government in the nuts, without changing the government. That is just what Tony Blair is inviting the electorate to do: replace the board, but leave the business intact.

To do this, it makes sense to get personal: doubly so because polls suggest that Major himself is more popular than his party, so anything Blair can do to knock him down is good tactics. But one senses more than tactics behind Blair's overt and subliminal message that he is a better man than his opponent. One senses that he really believes he does possess superior virtue, and that this is a matter of national importance.

We have got the message, and nothing has done more than Tony Blair's use of Prime Minister's Questions to ram it home. So far, the message has assisted Blair, politically. But I have a warning for him. This is hard to frame without verging upon Jungian mumbo-jumbo. I believe that, from those who govern us, or aspire to, we hear claims to superior personal virtue on two levels. At the conscious level the public is glad to learn that its would-be governor considers his own goodness important. At the unconscious level, however, we take a little umbrage at the claim. This is because none of us is without guilt and because — whatever they claim to believe — people half-like to suppose their leaders are the same. We would somewhat prefer it if they were.

At this unconscious level, every claim to virtue is a kind of reproach. The reproach may be directed, in Blair's case, at Major, but it ricochets off — however lightly — onto all his fellow men, including those he aspires to lead, and, however lightly, we are stung. Though the voters may cheer, to every wagging finger, two are invisibly raised. Behind the bright, audible, video-recordable world in which these years of Opposition have been played out, there is a parallel, dark, silent world in the unconscious mind of Britain: a world in which doubts and resentments hover and grow, waiting to be clothed with the name of action and thought.

As Mr Blair heads towards Downing Street, I can feel, almost touch, hanging in the air around him, the gathering *Schadenfreude* he has attracted over all those Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. It is a dangerous way to start.

Matthew Parris

## No help here

AT THE Helsinki summit, where a wheelchair-bound and sheepish-looking President Clinton had to be lowered from his plane to the Tarmac in a catering van, sympathy has moved on to another member of his party: Madeleine Albright, his new and formidable Secretary of State.

Her former husband, Joe Albright, who abandoned her for a younger woman 15 years ago, is also in Helsinki. That woman is now his wife, and she has accompanied him on the trip to Finland. Madeleine Albright has never

forgiven Joe for the morning in 1982 when he announced to her that he was in love with another woman. She had suspected nothing. "It was a shock," she said later. "Most of Washington knows that Joe left. I was very upset. I had been married for 23 years and I did not want a divorce."

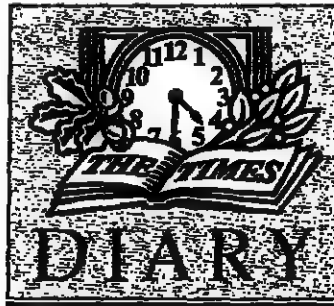
Joe walked out on her saying that the marriage was dead, and left her in tatters. The scion of a newspaper dynasty, he now works for a newspaper company in Moscow, and has been dispatched to cover the meeting between Boris Yeltsin and his former wife and the President.

"She still bears a real grudge for the manner in which he dumped her so unceremoniously," says one political observer. "She won't be going out of her way to help him with his story."

### Lions' share

EVEN after death, the curiously attired Marquess of Bath plans to have little truck with the stuffier members of his family.

He has decided he will not be buried, as is the custom, in the family vault at the Wiltshire



church of Longbridge Deverill near Longleat, his estate.

Describing the vault in next month's *Field* magazine he says it is "gloomy and claustrophobic". He explains: "I might not relish the company in which I found myself," adding that "corpses get disinterred and put on public display as an item from the political regime which nurtured them. I feel sure I wouldn't be looking my best." Instead, he plans a cremation, with some of his ashes to be scattered among the lions of Longleat and the rest kept in an urn for his family to share.

● An ambulance crew was stymied yesterday when it turned out to rescue a 22-stone man who had fallen out of a tree in Worsop, Nottinghamshire, and sprained his ankle. Unable to hoist him up, they summoned the fire brigade with their special lifting equip-

ment, but they couldn't help either. Eventually a helicopter hauled him off to safety.

### Brush up

AS Sir Gordon Downey's report on government sleaze dribbles out, at least one man in Westminster has shown himself beyond financial reproach: Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture.

After writing a light-hearted piece for a tabloid newspaper the other day about his love of hats and foxhunting, Hogg received a cheque for £300. Unable to accept, he duly returned it to the paper with a note attached. "If you would



like to donate this money to a good cause," he wrote. "might I suggest the British Field Sports Society?"

### Pole position

WHEN Margaret Thatcher's papers are properly installed in the archives centre of Churchill College, Cambridge, they will have as their handsome backdrop a group of flags returned from the Falklands conflict.

Nick Baker, who commanded HMS *Endurance* during the operation in 1982, and who was a defence fellow at Churchill, gave the college the Argentine flag which his men captured from the island of South Georgia. The Union Jack they put up in its place, and the white battle ensign from their ship.

The library has recently been redecorated, and the flags are now hanging prominently in the main reading room. Piers Brandon, keeper of the college archives centre, says: "The flags make a very handsome and appropriate backdrop when needed. We had them well before the Thatcher papers, but it is a very happy coincidence."

● Creative talent is working overtime in Bognor Regis, where the town's Watershed Theatre has embarked on a new project, Max Clif-

ford: The Musical. The show documents the public relations man's career and the sensational headlines that he has brought us.

### Catatonic

THE Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, risks being mauled by animal campaigners after unwittingly walking about with a dead cat on his head.

While on a recent visit to Ukraine, Portillo — who is more fond of animals than many of his Cabinet colleagues — decided to buy a fur hat to stave off frostbite in the 15-below-zero climate. One of his officials bought an identical hat, and both of them were snuggled in their coats towards the end of their visit.

When the civil servant returned home, however, his wife took one look at the hat and said: "Why are you wearing a dead cat on your head?" At first the chap thought it was a joke. But not so. His wife, a cat-lover, recognised the hat as cat fur. A veterinary friend confirmed his worst fear.

Michael Portillo was told the news and, as a result, has quickly acquired a new fur hat. He has been assured the replacement is not of feline origin.

P.H.S

## Labour won't pack the Lords

Hereditary peers should go, says

Tessa Blackstone

THE Prime Minister apparently believes that our constitution is fine and should not be changed. He seems oblivious of changes to the constitution during the 20th century. For example, he needs reminding that 100 years ago, more than half the population could not even vote, mainly because women were denied the franchise. In the late 19th century more than two-thirds of MPs in the Commons were peers or their sons. Their replacement by a more representative group, including boys from Brixton, is surely progress.

Labour is putting before the electorate a proposal to reform the House of Lords which will help to make further progress, as part of a programme for constitutional reform agreed with the Liberal Democrats. Since some Liberal Democrats were originally rather sniffy about Labour's two-stage approach to reform of the Lords, reaching agreement on this part of the constitutional package was particularly gratifying.

If Labour is elected, it will begin by tackling the scarcely defensible composition of the House of Lords, some 700 Members of which are there merely by virtue of their birth. Lord Redesdale, best known as the father of the Milford sisters, believed that the attacks on the hereditary peerage were akin to attacks on Christianity. "I inherited my title from my father just as Christ inherited His from God," he proclaimed. Such views are a little out of fashion these days. Nobody would argue that someone should be given a place in a football team just because his father was in it. Nevertheless, some pretty silly claims are still being made by Conservative hereditary peers. Even the intelligent and urbane Viscount Cranborne, the current Leader of the Lords, was uncharacteristically crass when he claimed, in a speech defending the present system, that hereditary peers represent the common man.

Not for much longer, perhaps. A Labour government would introduce a short Bill to prevent them from sitting and voting. Some sceptics say it is not worth doing because it will take up too much parliamentary time, since Tory hereditary peers, supported by their front bench, will vote for wrecking amendments, and resist their reversal in the Commons, by voting for similar amendments on the Bill's return to the Lords. They believe that were this to happen a Labour government would have to invoke the Parliament Act. They are wrong. Lord Cranborne has already said that the Salisbury-Addison doctrine, first enunciated by his grandfather, will apply. This establishes the convention that proposals in the Queen's Speech which were also in the new government's election manifesto and for which the government therefore has a mandate should not be rejected by the unelected House.

Many hereditary peers don't bother to turn up. Of those who do, well over 300 take the Conservative whip, compared with fewer than 20 who take the Labour whip. This imbalance is unhealthy and stops the House from working properly as a revising chamber. It means that those who have won the argument often lose the vote because the Tory aristocracy can be summoned to Westminster by their whips to vote for the Conservative line, as happened in the poll tax debate. Use of backwoodsmen in this way brings the Lords into disrepute and prevents it from fulfilling its proper function as a check on the government.

There are wild stories around that Labour intends to pack the House of Lords with hundreds of new life peers brought in on a party list. This is not true, even though the removal of the hereditary peers still leaves an imbalance in party representation in the Lords, partly because Margaret Thatcher always insisted that more life peers be created for Tories than for the other side. Labour and the Liberal Democrats have agreed instead that gradually, over the course of the next Parliament, we should move towards a position "where those peers who take a party whip more accurately reflect the proportion of votes received by each party in the general election".

Some commentators have been worried about the future of the crossbench peers, who do not take any party whip. Their independence, particularly when it is combined with wide experience, knowledge and expertise, is rightly valued. The agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats acknowledges this and proposes that when the hereditary peers have gone, crossbenchers should remain at the present proportion of about a fifth, and that they should be consulted about ways of replenishing their numbers. There has also been concern about the fate of those hereditary peers who currently make an important contribution to the Lords, and some of whom are ministers. Labour intends to make it possible for them to become life peers.

Once the first stage of reform is in place, there will not be a long delay in moving to the second stage. Labour plans to set up a committee of both Houses during the next Parliament. It will be asked to come up with recommendations for a more democratic and representative Upper House. Labour's determination to establish a democratic and efficient second chamber is central to its programme to modernise our constitution. The Conservatives' decision to defend the hereditary peerage's automatic right to sit in the Upper House is both foolish and reactionary.

Baroness Blackstone is a Labour spokesman in the Lords.



Albright: abandoned





## RIGHT TO KNOW

Parliament has been denied the chance to put its house in order

The House of Commons rises today with its reputation dangerously low. The final Prime Ministerial Question Time of this Parliament was a juvenile exercise — the politics of the sandpit. The cause was a serious matter, the failure of this Parliament to put itself in order before it presents itself to the people. The manner of the party leaders' disagreement did not match the importance of the matter at dispute. The current argument over "sleaze" may be presented by the Prime Minister as an opportunistic assault on the Tories, but popular concern with standards in public life is not defined by party boundaries.

Yesterday the body charged with regulating the Commons, the Standards and Privileges Committee, responded to the pressure for a proper treatment of "sleaze" allegations with a report which provoked more questions than it answered. Fifteen MPs were exonerated but the serious doubts hanging over Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith remain. Moreover, other MPs hitherto neglected may now be presumed guilty of misconduct in the absence of unambiguous assurance of their innocence. Far from lancing the boil, the infection has spread. It is in the interest of the accused MPs and the voters that the facts are known. The case for publication of Sir Gordon Downey's report is stronger than ever.

Caveats have been entered. The Privileges Committee yesterday reminded the Commons that publication of Sir Gordon's report would not end matters. Those members found to be at fault would have the right to make further representations before a final conclusion was reached. Such a process, they laconically conclude, "could take a considerable time". Apologists for the Government argue that even if the prorogation of Parliament were delayed to allow the committee to receive Sir Gordon's report it would not then have that "considerable time" to consider the report.

It is true that the most appropriate treatment of these matters would see such a lengthy inquiry take place, but the best should not become the enemy of the good. Rather than suppressing the report and allowing rumour, leak and the wild allegations of reckless campaigners to define debate throughout the election campaign, it would be infinitely better to publish. The committee's *amour propre* is not as important as the public's right to know.

There is nothing recklessly novel in calling for Sir Gordon's report to be published upon completion. The report of Lord Nolan's Commission into Standards in Public Life recommended that Sir Gordon have the power to "make findings and conclusions public" in the same way as the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

The Prime Minister stopped his ears yesterday to arguments for openness and chose instead to see current anger over the suppression of the Downey report as a creation of the Labour Party, manufactured to divert attention from falling unemployment. It is certainly the case that Tony Blair scents blood, but that is because the Prime Minister shot himself in the foot.

John Major treated the genuine concern of the Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes as a matter for levity. Mr Hughes queried the suppression of Sir Gordon's report in the Commons, and *The Times* called for publication in this column, before the announcement of any unemployment figures. It is Parliament's name, not the advantage of any party, that matters. If the Prime Minister had delayed Parliament's rising in order to facilitate publication of Sir Gordon's report, then he might have gone some way to restoring faith in the ability of the Commons to regulate itself. In treating concern so cavalierly, however, the Prime Minister has done both his party and Parliament a disservice.

## HELLO, HELLO, DOLLY, DOLLY

Here is a Commons committee working as committees should

Dolly, the cloned sheep which is now almost as famous as her namesake Dolly Parton, burst upon a world whose psyche had been thoroughly prepared by the powerful images of science, fiction. Ever since Mary Shelley whirled away a wet summer writing *Frankenstein*, the vision of the "crazed scientist creating life in a test-tube has been a staple of the genre. The fevered public reaction to Dolly cloned is thus both understandable, and a tribute to the power of literature to shape the mind.

More sober reflections have come from the Committee on Science and Technology of the House of Commons, which has shown uncommon dispatch in producing a report on the Dolly breakthrough. The report contains much good sense, in urging that the instinctive reaction of horror at the prospect of human cloning should not be allowed to cloud the real prospects of benefit that come from cloning animals. These include producing medicinal proteins from the milk of genetically engineered animals, a better understanding of human development and disease, improving the productivity of animals in agriculture and, more speculatively, the possibility of cloning not human beings, but human organs.

The committee — save Sir Trevor Skeet, who provides a minority report of his own — is agreed that the regulatory regime in Britain is well-fitted to cope with the challenges of cloning. Unlike the United States, where the subject appears to have been given little thought, Britain already has a framework of law, and institutions in the form of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the new Human Genetics Advisory Commission, which itself owes its existence to the persistence of the

Commons committee in advocating it. Between these two, this country should not fail for the lack of well-considered advice.

The committee says that human cloning using the Roslin technique should be illegal, if it is not already. Doubts arise over the legal interpretation of the word embryo. The 1990 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act bans human cloning using embryos, but the Roslin method uses adult material, combined with an enucleated egg. Is this an embryo? Legal opinion is being sought, but this is not enough for the committee, which wants Parliament to amend the law to remove loopholes. The problem, of course, is that science may discover yet more cloning methods, which would necessitate yet further changes. Tweaking of the law may be needed, but Parliament should also heed the advice of Ruth Deech, chairman of the HFEA, who warned the committee that the law should be kept flexible to accommodate future scientific developments.

The committee has some sharp words for the embattled Ministry of Agriculture, which celebrated the cloning of Dolly by cutting its funding to the Roslin Institute. Cavalier and blinkered are the words the committee uses to describe this action, and they cannot be improved upon. Given its record over BSE — where far too little was spent on research — and *E. coli*, where good scientific advice was ignored, it is plain that research management is not the ministry's strong point. Its reluctance to share data with outside researchers is another blot on its record. The committee is right to call for a full-scale investigation during the next Parliament of the ways in which the ministry commissions and uses research and scientific advice.

## OUR MAN IN OUR VOLVO

When a correspondent goes beyond the call of duty

Journalists are supposed to stay apart from the events that they describe. But sometimes, like our man in Albania yesterday, they cannot. Anthony Loyd tells his own story on page 16 of how he was co-opted by special forces for a desperate evacuation of an orphanage at Elbasan. This was a feral operation in a perilous place. It was carried out darkly at dead of night, in body armour and with the Times Volvo driving shotgun. It was the sort of story-book experience that happens to journalists' subjects, not normally to journalists themselves. And unlike so many newspaper stories it has a happy ending. All the orphans were safely rescued.

Journalists come in all shapes. Our man in our Volvo is characteristic of a line of foreign correspondents stretching back intermittently over two centuries. Since, unlike his TV colleagues, he is not a familiar face we should say that he is a pony-tailed former Greenjacket and bushwhacker aged 30, that he fought in the Gulf War and that his great-grandfather won a Victoria Cross at the Somme. Like the most famous of all our war reporters, William Howard Russell, his job includes taking calculated risks on the dangerous edge of things.

Russell of the Crimea is known by name. Because of archaic convention and for reasons of security, the names of the other war correspondents were unknown to the newspaper's readers safely away from the drums and the guns. Theirs was the famous

byline "From Our Own Correspondent". But sometimes they were not only "our" and more than just a correspondent. Ferdinand Eber arrived in Sicily as Garibaldi began his long march on Rome, and was appointed a general of the insurgents. Although the writers of this column disappeared, they needed his stirring copy and kept him on. In the Balkans J. D. Bourchier was depicted on a stamp in Bulgarian national costume and holding a gun. Crabb Morrison at Corunna, China Morrison in Peking and many other Times correspondents helped to make history as well as the edition.

Some, tragically, died in the danger. Frank Power had his throat cut at Khartoum. Walter Harris, Our Special Correspondent in Morocco, was thrown into a cell full of decapitated bodies, and only escaped decapitation himself by a hair. Frank Riley was murdered in 1927 covering the civil war in China.

War correspondents tend to be bad risks for life, motor or any other insurance. But being a good risk is not the accolade they seek. "I wonder what would have come of it all had I followed the quiet path instead of noisy drums and trumpets", wrote Russell in his later years. He did not care too much what the answer might have been. Nor do we. Our own correspondents still sometimes march towards the sound of the gunfire, find the news and file the copy. And we who read it should occasionally salute them.

## Election brickbats and boasts, propaganda and pledges

From the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury

Sir, It is Labour's Alistair Darling (letter, March 19) who deceives himself over the economic performance of the last 18 years. His claim that the Government has centralised power on an "unparalleled level" ignores the devolution of power from often highly politicised local authorities to schools and from the incompetent central government economic planners of the 1970s to industry and consumers.

Achievements on spending as a percentage of national income have to be seen in the context of massive increases in other industrialised countries and the shift of spending away from loss-making nationalised industries in the 1970s to spending on core services such as health and law and order.

In 1979 the nationalised industries were losing £50 million every week; privatised industries now contribute £60 million to the Exchequer in corporation tax.

His claim that the UK growth rate since 1979 is less than that achieved under Labour conveniently evades the fact that the 1970s were a higher growth, but also a much higher inflation era. Our growth is now much closer to the EU average. Just as important, we have moved from the bottom of the league of G7 countries for manufacturing productivity growth in the 1960s and 1970s to the top since 1980. That was why the independent National Institute for Economic and Social Research recently proclaimed that we had closed four fifths of the competitiveness gap with Germany.

Most ludicrous is Mr Darling's claim on debt. The national debt has been lower every single year under this Government than in any year under Labour and is the lowest of all major EU countries. We have also borrowed at, on average, half the level of the last Labour Government.

No one would claim that governments do not make mistakes, but the fact is that Britain's very long-term decline has been halted in the past 18 years — which might explain why Mr Darling's party has so hurriedly had to abandon most of its central economic policies and adopt the Government's own tax and spending plans.

Yours faithfully,  
PHILLIP OPPENHEIM,  
House of Commons,  
March 19.

From Mr David Gale

Sir, Your leading article today states that "Mr Major's desire to maintain the highest standards in public life is conspicuous". Yet he has presided over the most conspicuously disreputable Government of my (62 years)

### Nato enlargement

From Mr P. J. Riddell

Sir, Western reaction to Russia's hostilities towards an extended Nato (leading article, March 20) reminds me uncomfortably of the Versailles Treaty's attitude towards Germany after the First World War.

I believe it would be a grave mistake to consider Russia to have been defeated in the Cold War. Rather it has emerged from an experiment with a philosophy which has proved to be flawed, but the experience of which has nevertheless something to teach the world.

In any case, we should beware of humiliating a nation and riding roughshod over legitimate concerns which can only store up trouble for future generations.

Yours sincerely,  
P. J. RIDDELL,  
12a Northam Road, Oxford,  
March 20.

From Lord Kenner

Sir, Last Friday you published letters from Professor Sir Michael Howard, our foremost historian, and Sir Frank Cooper, a most distinguished former Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence (March 14), each warning that the Government's unexplained drive for Nato expansion is pointless and dangerous.

On the same day I raised a mini-debate on Nato enlargement in the House of Lords. It lasted 90 minutes. I had ten minutes to speak, Lord Chesham, the non-specialist whip who was answering instead of any minister, had 15. He ended: "I have considerably more to say, but... time has caught up with me." The 12 other speakers had five minutes each. It had been a fight to get that.

Lord Chesham also said: "No issue has higher priority in Britain's foreign policy." He spoke of democracy and transparency and, answering none of the questions raised, limited himself, in Sir Frank's word, to "assertions".

Why has Nato's future remained undiscussed in either House of Parliament except for a 40-minute wiring in the Commons three weeks ago and this one Lords' debate, both on the initiative of backbenchers? The Foreign Office does not even know if the matter has been examined in other parliaments.

What was Nato supposed to defend? Was it democracy?

Yours etc.  
KENNET,  
House of Lords,  
March 19.

Sport letters, page 43

lifetime. Westminster is littered with the half-buried remains of 'sleaze, mendacity and questionable conduct of government, ministers and MPs over the last five years.

If the buck does actually arrive and stop in Downing Street, how is it that Mr Major manages to hang on to his honourable reputation?

Yours sincerely,  
DAVID GALE,  
37 Harlech Road, N7,  
March 20.

From Mrs Linda Moule

Sir, Over the next six weeks every elderly Conservative should remind first-time voters of the reality of life under a Labour government.

Yours faithfully,  
L. MOULE,  
White Coppice Farm,  
High Hurstwood, East Sussex.

From Mr Martin Ornstein

Sir, The newsworthiness of a 44-day "longest election fight in memory" (report, March 17) can only bring a smile and a sigh of envy from an American reader. In order to elect a president we are forced to endure well over a year of adverts, debates, interviews, rallies, promises, enthusiastic announcements, tearful withdrawals, the hype and spectacle of the conventions, unremitting attacks, accusations and "sound bites".

A world where all this is condensed down to 44 days is Utopia indeed.

Yours sincerely,  
MARTIN H. ORNSTEIN,  
26-15 Quail Ridge Drive,  
Plainboro, New Jersey.

From Mr A. R. Reynolds

Sir, The tendency towards televised debates for "prime ministerial" candidates must be considered unwelcome, at least from one point of view. This, together with the ever-increasing emphasis given to the party above the person standing for election in a constituency, detracts from the main purpose of a general election.

Each elector is voting for a candidate to represent him or her at the Palace of Westminster. We are not voting for a prime minister. Even the residents of Huntingdon and Sedgfield should not be under this misapprehension.

Yours sincerely,  
A. REYNOLDS,  
Whitwell, 41 Chesterton Avenue,  
Harpenden, Hertfordshire,  
March 17.

From Ms Naomi Holloway

Sir, I was dismayed to see in your reports today one that referred to the

### Aid for Albania

From Dr Raymond Hutchings

Sir, You are quite right (leading article today) that it was "shameful" that Europe could not deal with violence and atrocities in former Yugoslavia. But as regards Albania, you conclude that "very considerable humanitarian aid in the very short term" may well be needed.

One cannot deny the need, but how can aid get in unless at least one port and airport are secured?

In Apollonia, Malcolm Rifkind opposed the French and Italian proposal to deploy up to 3,000 men to make secure Tirana airport, and in the light of your recommendation, it seems illogical that you too do not favour that proposal.

Yours faithfully,  
R. HUTCHINGS  
(Author,  
*Historical Dictionary of Albania*,  
Scarecrow Press, 1996),  
168 Turnpike Link,  
Croydon, Surrey,  
March 17.

### Tunnels questioned

From Dr Martin R. Cragg

Sir, The proposal from David Green, President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (letter, March 11), that London's traffic problems can be solved by an underground network of tunnels is certainly innovative but I would suggest impracticable.

Tunnelling unfortunately is a very expensive solution and in London prohibitively so, given the enormous related cost of diverting services, including the Underground network. The associated works would also be extremely disruptive to traffic over the many years of construction.

All the political parties are supportive of a sustainable transport policy. We should seek to contain or even reduce private vehicular movement, not to foster it, and to encourage more environmentally friendly modes of transport, namely (light) rail, bus, cycling and walking.

Travel into central London is ideally suited to public transport as the routes are radial. The difficulty is in coping with orbital movements, especially in outer London, which cannot easily be provided by public transport and for which tunnelling is unlikely to help. In any event, by comparison with other major European cities, London's traffic moves relatively freely.

As Mr Green suggests, tolling could be an important source of funds. But any money available for improving transport in London should be largely earmarked for the long overdue im-

provements in public (sustainable) transport and traffic management schemes.

Yours truly,  
MARTIN CRAGG  
(Chief Executive and Secretary),  
The Institution of Highway and Transportation,  
6 Endsleigh Street, WC1.

From Lord Berkeley

Sir, As a member of his institution, I applaud David Green's efforts to secure work for his members, but is his idea really a transport priority?

A tunnel to carry 5,000 passengers per hour in their cars would probably cost five to ten times the cost of one to carry the same number in trains under ground, and cause much greater environmental damage.

I suggest that his institution should direct its energies to promoting projects which have some chance of being realised, such as Thameslink 2000, Crossrail or the East London Line extension, along with a comprehensive network of bus lanes and transport interchanges. These will do much more to improve the quality of life in London, and at a much lower cost, than a rabbit warren of road tunnels.

Yours,  
BERKELEY  
(Chairman, Railfreight Group),  
House of Lords,  
March 12.

From Mr B. M. Suchak

Sir, I would like to suggest to Mr Nicholas Budgen (article, "We ignore immigration at our peril", March 18) that an influx of any 400 families would cause considerable social tension in his village. His emphasis on Asian families is not only misplaced but also dangerous.

Yours faithfully,  
B. M. SUCHAK,  
Suchak & Co (solicitors),  
472 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex,  
March 18.

From Dr G. P. Bowker

Sir, Your cartoon summary today of Major's reign is ironic, especially the cartoon depicting electricity privatisation, captioned "Privatisation gave power to the people".

At the moment, shareholders in London Electricity who do not wish to sell their shares to the American company Entergy are having them compulsorily purchased under provisions of the Company's Act 1985. So much for a shareholders' democracy.

The choice, it seems, is not, as the Eurosceptics claim, between power remaining in Westminster or going to Brussels, but between it remaining here or going to Wall Street.

Yours sincerely,  
G. P. BOWKER,  
4 Hillgate Place, Kensington, W8,  
March 18.

From Mr Maurice Taylor

Sir, Not dissimilar in content and style to the general election, an equally enriching event will be taking place at about the same time.

As anyone who follows the Eurovision Song Contest will know, the resulting scores are infinitely more entertaining than the songs that have been sung.

Yours sincerely,  
MAURICE TAYLOR,  
22 Claremont Hill,  
Shrewsbury, Shropshire,  
March 16.

From Dr P. J. Horsey

Sir, The retrieval of US39's codebooks in November 1942 (Ralph Erskine's letter, March 18) involved all three members of HMS Petard's crew stripping naked and diving into the rough sea in darkness to reach the submarine. Tommy Brown was a boy assistant to the Naafi canteen manager and therefore a civilian. It was he who handed the codebooks to the seaboat's crew. The submarine sank suddenly when he was at the top of the ladder leading to the control room and he was the only one to be picked up.

When his age (16) became known he was sent home and lost his life two years later while attempting to save his infant sister from a fire which engulfed his South Shields home. His George Medal was well deserved and it would be interesting to know what became of it.

Yours faithfully,  
PETER HORSEY,  
The Old Manor,  
Ashley, Stockbridge, Hampshire.

From Professor Paul Kline

Sir, The strange thing is not that Tadao Ando cannot call himself an architect (report, March 20) but that those who have passed architectural exams can.

Yours sincerely,  
PAUL KLINE,  
University of Exeter,  
Department of Psychology,  
Exeter, Devon,  
March 20.

From Mr John Eden

Sir, We shouldn't be surprised that bananas have supplanted apples in the public affection (report, March 19), given that bananas still taste like bananas, whereas apples taste of nothing in particular.

Yours, etc.  
JOHN EDEN,  
12 Eastern Road,  
Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands,  
March 19.

### Too close for comfort

From Mr Robin Findlay

Sir, I suggest that Sir George Cooper (letter, March 17) need not worry unduly about the letter he received signed by a lady calling herself the Head of Fulfillment... as I did this morning — from a lady describing herself as Operational Quality.

Yours faithfully,  
ROBIN FINDLAY,  
10 Glebe Road, Cheam, Surrey,  
March 17.

## Film censor's duty 'to uphold values'

From Mr Peter M. Noonan

Sir, I was dismayed to see that the British Board of Film Classification has approved the showing of the film *Crash* (report, March 19).

You report that in coming to its decision the board obtained the professional opinions of a QC who specialises in obscenity cases and a forensic psychiatrist. But such "expert" advice should not, in my view, be put forward as justification for the board's conclusions.

The public expects its film censors to protect the mores and values of British society by the application to questions of decency of simple common sense.

Film makers expect the censors' policies to be clear and consistent. Time perhaps for the censors to be censured?

Yours faithfully,  
PETER NOONAN,  
Palm Beach, 21 Orchard Hill,  
Rudgwick, West Sussex,  
March 19.

From Councillor Robert Moreland

Sir, You report the legal adviser to the British Board of Film Classification as stating that the "average viewer" would reject the values of the film *Crash*.

The real concern is not the "average viewer", or indeed the majority of viewers, who no doubt will reject the values of the film and, hopefully, will find it repulsive. The concern of those of us who viewed the film for Westminster Council is the effect on those — no doubt a minority — who could be influenced by the values of the film. If one person takes seriously the message expressed by one character, that road crashes "stimulate", then there should be public concern.

I see no public benefit — or enjoyment — in showing the film, at least without the cuts suggested by Westminster City Council.

Yours faithfully,  
ROBERT MORELAND  
(Councillor for Knightsbridge),  
Westminster City Council,  
Victoria Street, SW1,  
March 19.

### Voices in the House

From Mr J. S. Roche

Sir, It is always unwelcome to disagree with Betty Boothroyd, but there are strong constitutional arguments against her ruling on papers in the Commons (report, March 13). The issue is a much wider one than just the noise of an interruption, as clearly a paper could be silent and the information it provided, deadly.

The real question is the unreality of the assumption that — unlike traders, bankers, doctors, civil servants or most other professionals — MPs should be expected to be expertly briefed beforehand on all matters that could conceivably arise in the chamber, or in committee. Clearly they cannot.

It is right to deny MPs the opportunity to make better, more informed contributions to debate as a result of information that they can be provided by researchers whilst debates are in progress? Democracy will ultimately be the poorer if those who control the practices of the House of Commons do not recognise that legislation is better made through expertise than rhetoric. Please think again, Madam Speaker.

Yours faithfully,  
J. S. ROCHE,  
19 Cabot Drive, Didsen,  
Southampton, Hampshire.

### Architectural merit

From Professor Paul Kline

Sir, The strange thing is not that Tadao Ando cannot call himself an architect (report, March 20) but that those who have passed architectural exams can.

Yours sincerely,  
PAUL KLINE,  
University of Exeter,  
Department of Psychology,  
Exeter, Devon,  
March 20.

### Yes, we have none

From Mr John Eden

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## OBITUARIES

## WILLEM DE KOONING

Willem de Kooning, artist, died on March 19 aged 92. He was born on April 24, 1904.

Willem de Kooning was the last surviving giant of modern art. He was at the centre of the American art movement known as Abstract Expressionism, which started in the 1940s in New York and went on to dominate American and European contemporary art for the next twenty years.

Abstract Expressionism was about liberation, freeing art from the things it no longer needed. It had its genesis in the experience of a generation which had spent its youth in a major economic depression and its young adulthood in a world war. It was personal and self-revelatory in style, yet evoked timeless emotions, fears and beliefs.

Even after its passing, right up to the art of today, the movement continues to exert a powerful influence. The styles that followed it, and which were in various ways reactions against it — Pop Art, Conceptualism and Minimalism, for example — all drew heavily on attitudes that were already in place in the Abstract Expressionist aesthetic, namely radical doubt and a profoundly ambivalent love-hate relationship with the past.

De Kooning's work went through considerable changes in his long life. He never lost touch altogether with figuration, but recognisable things seemed to come and go in his paintings. He painted pictures that were harsh angular abstractions, with gritty surfaces, which were understood to be metaphors for modern urban life. Other pictures were flowing and lyrical, with sweet, rich colour, and these were seen as poetic amalgams of natural landscape forms and the female body.

De Kooning himself changed too from the art history book figure who reinvented the heroic early Modernism of Picasso and Matisse, recasting it for a new age, living in poverty until well into his forties; to the cultural icon, the Marlon Brando of the 1950s art world, good-looking in a T-shirt, achieving sudden and enormous

wealth and fame; to the vulnerable man who descended into a semi-hell of drink and tranquillisers, but went on turning out works of startling originality, grace and beauty until old age and chronic illness finally caused him to stop working.

His style was to improvise extraordinary visual events. The improvising was high-energy and aggressive, an endless process of making, erasing and remaking. He famously alienated long bouts of staring and worrying. The final results are compelling. The pictures cannot be pinned down. They look ugly and elegant at the same time, direct and revealing, yet strange and ambiguous, too.

Willem de Kooning was born in Rotterdam, Holland. He was apprenticed at the age of 12 to a local company of commercial artists run by the decorators Jan and Jaap Gidding. His talent prompted Jaap to arrange for him to attend night classes at the local art and craft school, the *Akademie voor Beeldende en Technische Wetenschappen*. There, over a period of eight years as a pupil, he acquired a strict academic training and a wide range of craft skills.

Graduating in 1926, he also attended art schools in Brussels and Antwerp. In art theory, he de Stijl group around Mondrian and Van Doesburg was then predominant. From 1920 to 1926, de Kooning worked as assistant to Bernard Romain, art director of a Rotterdam department store.

Setting his sights, however, on America (where Mondrian himself was to arrive years later in 1940), de Kooning, after several unsuccessful attempts, arrived in the United States as a stowaway in 1926. Working first as a house painter in Hoboken, New Jersey, he moved to New York in 1927, taking a variety of jobs in decorating, signwriting, carpentry, commercial art and stage design.

In the next few years de Kooning, who had become a "Sunday painter", became friends with Arshile Gorky, the Russian painter who had arrived in the US in 1920 and who was then teaching in New York.

Gorky was to paint de Kooning's portrait around 1937, as *Portrait of Master Bill*. Another friend was John Graham, born Ivan Danabrowsky in Kiev, painter, writer and collector, who brought many modern European ideas to art in America and whose portrait busts of strange, cross-eyed females may have influenced the images of women for which de Kooning was to become famous.

During the 1930s de Kooning made many uncompleted works, with three main themes: men, women, and abstraction. The men (a theme he dropped after the 1940s) and the women showed his admiration for Ingres in particular, and were realistic in style. The biomorphic, flat abstractions showed more of the influence of Arp, Miró, and Picasso, along with the linear structures of de Stijl. But it was not until 1938 that de Kooning decided to give all his time to fine art.

In the early 1940s, de Kooning's studies of women lost their realistic appearance and began to mingle with the background paint and colours. In the mid-1940s his paintings grew more violent, with accident increasingly determining their composition. Sometimes collage was used to break them up, and in 1946 he embarked on a series of even more violent black-and-white paintings, done with cheap household enamels, which marked the final disappearance of recognisable form in his work. His first one-artist exhibition was at the Egan Gallery in 1948, although he had already shown with other artists such as Jackson Pollock.

By 1950 the Abstract Expressionist movement was well under way. Pollock, de Kooning, Gorky, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman had made a name for themselves. The gestural freedoms of de Kooning and his friends' work, human reference never quite disappeared from de Kooning's art. His art seemed to develop under conflicting pressures. He said that it is absurd to paint a human image but just as absurd not to. He wanted to stay ahead of his critics, to escape their pigeonholing. But at the same



De Kooning was a brilliant and passionate conversationalist, and was admired by the younger generation for his integrity and dedication to art, and for his risk-taking — or "going for broke" — in the language of the times. He was imitated right across America. Despite all his experience of abstraction in his own and his friends' work, human reference never quite disappeared from de Kooning's art. His art seemed to develop under conflicting pressures. He said that it is absurd to paint a human image but just as absurd not to. He wanted to stay ahead of his critics, to escape their pigeonholing. But at the same

time he wanted to play with them, to draw them along. Having achieved notoriety with what might be described as a kind of allusive abstraction, he suddenly lurched, in the early 1950s, into what seemed like full-blown figuration. He painted wild night-mare sex goddesses, like female versions of Frankenstein's monster, their body parts — faces, breasts, teeth, limbs — only partly coordinated. His *Woman I* (1950-52) — seen in London in 1959 when the epoch-making show *The New American Painting* arrived at the Tate Gallery — became his most famous im-

age. It was likened by one critic to "Mother Kali walking the New York streets as a bag lady". De Kooning himself was surprised that nobody ever noticed how funny his "Women" paintings were. For all their spontaneous appearance as savage, demonic images of radical daily life, de Kooning's female images have often a long history of radical daily life, de Kooning's female images have often a long history of radical daily life, de Kooning's female images have often a long history of radical daily life.

De Kooning said that art never made him feel "peaceful or pure". Instead he was always "wrapped up in the melodrama of vulgarity". And his art over the next thirty years was indeed a triumph of impurity. In the 1960s and 1970s, when he was no longer at the centre of art world discussion, the women became more comic and cartoon-like, the landscapes more melted and misty, the brushwork more liquid and glutinous, the colour more bruised and effulgent. For some years after 1964, de Kooning took up sculpture.

Many critics have argued that de Kooning's work declined after the 1950s. As his fame grew and his market value rose, he became increasingly isolated from critics and other artists. He had moved out of Manhattan to a quiet, purpose-built studio home in Long Island. His behaviour became erratic and self-destructive. He had already been drinking heavily when he was young, and by the late 1970s he was extremely ill. Nursed by his wife, Elaine de Kooning, from whom he had long been separated, he made a partial recovery and began painting after a two-year break.

De Kooning's central position through the decades of the New York School (ultimately as its elder statesman) was dramatically underlined in May 1987, when his *Pink Lady* of 1944 set a record price for a living artist, of \$3.63 million — only subsequently exceeded, in prices for postwar painting, by the work of Jackson Pollock and Jasper Johns. Then in November 1989, de Kooning's *Interchange* of 1955 set a further, vastly increased, record of \$20.68 million — selling to a Japanese collector.

In 1989, when he was in his mid-eighties, de Kooning was announced to be suffering from Alzheimer's disease. His daughter, Lisa de Kooning, issued a statement that he had been declared legally incompetent, and after that his life was organised on a daily basis by teams of nurses and lawyers. He stopped painting in 1990. He had exhibited very little in the 1980s but soon some of the paintings from that decade, which had been hidden in his studio, began

appearing in public exhibitions and subsequently in the auction houses, where they fetched high prices.

These late paintings, made partly with the aid of assistants, are curiosities rather than masterpieces. They marked another radical stylistic break. The colours were reduced to stark primaries and white, and where there had been rich, atmospheric spaces, there was now a recurring flat, almost diagrammatic configuration, part female anatomy, part landscape. The shapes were like schematic versions of his earlier paintings, and in fact many of them were based on slide projections of earlier works.

But were these pictures really "de Koonings" at all? He had painted them, but was he really himself at the time? How far back had he become ill? He could no longer sign his own name when many of them were executed. Surely, it was objected, significant art is not just a matter of unfettered emotion and creativity, but relies also on a build-up of knowledge and experience, on high mental alertness?

The critical and philosophical speculations that the pictures aroused when they appeared were thrown into lurid relief by the fact that their market value was in the region of a million dollars per painting, and that there were known to be about three hundred of them. A number were gathered together at the Museum of Modern Art in New York earlier this year, and the reception was mixed.

In the end it may be that de Kooning's last great flowering — his period of late greatness, like the famous late periods of Matisse or Titian, say — was not the 1980s but the 1970s. This was the time when he perhaps felt most free from outside pressures, and was able — physically, emotionally and spiritually — to make something unique and significant out of that freedom.

Elaine Marie Catharine Fried, whom de Kooning married in 1943 and who as Elaine de Kooning won her own considerable reputation as a painter and writer, died in 1989. De Kooning is survived by his daughter.

## JACQUES FOCCART



that, when another general's punch in Algeria in 1961 threatened de Gaulle's hold on power, the French President entrusted an important state papers and "fall-back" emergency plans to Foccart. De Gaulle always referred to Foccart as "le Père Joseph", a title of approval denoting his possessing many of the secretive and servile qualities of Cardinal Richelieu's original eminence grise of that name.

De Gaulle and Foccart both loathed transparency. The former considered secrecy an indispensable part of the mystique of power, the latter a necessary tool in his dealings, which included an about turn on Algeria Française, which he supported, and then adapting to sub-Saharan decolonisation.

Foccart was to accompany de Gaulle on several major African tours in the 1950s. In the meantime, he had been one of a small group of faithful supporters, which had set up the first postwar Gaullist political party, the RPF (Rassemblement du Peuple Français). He became the RPF's general secretary in 1954 and was well placed to take part in the manoeuvring and plotting that led to the Algiers putsch of May 13, 1958, which preceded de Gaulle's return to power.

From that moment, he had his own office in the Elysée with overall responsibility for African affairs and the secret services. He had direct access to de Gaulle and it was said

De Gaulle was fascinated by Africa. Although he had granted de Gaulle's hold on colonies in West and Central Africa he saw these states as essential backing for France's role in the world and in forums such as the UN. Foccart, who listed his occupation as "exporter", as well as Secretary-General for the French Community and African Affairs, engaged in the daily task of maintaining harmonious and profitable relations with France's African supporters, notably the long-time Ivory Coast leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Foccart's main listening post was in Dakar, Senegal, the one-time capital of French West Africa. President Pompidou retained his services, but Giscard d'Estaing, implicated in a diamonds scandal with Bokassa, did not. President Chirac rehired Foccart upon his election in 1995, and the old Africa hand once again had an official office. He certainly had Chirac's ear and helped to perpetuate the system whereby African policy is dictated by the Elysée and not by the Quai d'Orsay.

He was a founder of the notorious Service d'Action Civique, the Gaullist Party's internal police force, later accused by the Americans of engaging in drug trafficking. To these and other accusations Foccart would reply that de Gaulle would not have kept him for 24 hours, let alone 24 years, if any of the charges had been true.

He dictated his memoirs two years ago, but revealed very little except French support for the Biafrans in the late 1960s, supposedly in return for oil for Elf. He continued to receive African leaders in Paris and it was said he knew the names of most of their children. He was predeceased by his wife Isabelle.

Jacques Foccart, special adviser on African affairs to Presidents de Gaulle, Pompidou and Chirac, died in L'Azur, near Paris, on March 19 aged 83. He was born on August 31, 1913, at Ambrières-les-Vallees, in the Department of Mayenne.

FOR forty years, Jacques Foccart played the leading and often conspiratorial role in maintaining France's ties and influences in the African countries that had once been part of the French Empire. He was so successful that, despite the

decolonisation decreed by his idol, General de Gaulle, at the start of the 1960s, France was able to retain a protective role in raw materials, notably oil, but, above all, in strategic influence.

With his famous networks, or *réseaux*, of political, military and secret service contacts, Foccart was the architect of a form of neo-colonialism, backed by contingents of French paratroopers, that has only recently shown signs of cracking with the advent of new, more democratic, leaders in the 1990s and, to an extent, the rise in American influence

in the region. Foccart's last crusade was against what he considered American plotting in France's African *domaine réservé*.

The death of the Frenchman known as "L'Africain" ironically coincided with the decline of the regime of President Mobutu of Zaire, a French-speaking despot he had long supported. Mobutu was a frequent visitor to Foccart's house near Paris and the Frenchman's backing was largely instrumental in his remaining welcome in France to this day.

Other African leaders of French-speaking states had

need over the years for more muscular support. It was said that Foccart had standing orders from them to intervene with French troops when necessary. Only the dates were kept blank on these documents in Foccart's office in the Elysée Palace. He helped to restore the deposed President Leon Mbu in Gabon in 1964 and later supported Mba's successor Omar Bongo, whose long reign has been a typical example of France's post-colonial African connection, based as it is on a trade-off of Gabonese oil, via the French Elf company, and a French military garrison.

Some of his protégés, however, proved to be disasters, none more so than the late self-styled Emperor Jean-Bédou Bokassa, of the Central African Republic-cum-Empire, who was later overthrown but settled in France like so many other ex-dictators, some of whom lived in style on the Riviera.

Foccart, who had founded the Gaullist movement's own paramilitary organisation, thrived on secrecy and the nature of his ties, for example, to Colonel Bob Denard, tragicomic leader of several African coups d'état, was never clear. He always told interviewers that they could read everything later in the archives. The only boast he could not resist was that he had held an estimated 3,000 tête-à-tête meetings with de Gaulle over the eleven-year period between de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 and his resignation in 1969.

De Gaulle was the guiding force in the life of Foccart, who was born into a family of prosperous farmers and then raised in Guadeloupe where the family also had land. Later, in France, he went into business — notably the sale of Renault cars in the French West Indies — and did well.

The destiny of this short, rather round, fastidious businessman was changed by the war. He organised parachute drops on behalf of the secret service branch of the Free French in London. After the Liberation,

de Gaulle rewarded him with the post of aide-de-camp and special adviser on France's overseas departments and African colonies.

Foccart was to accompany de Gaulle on several major African tours in the 1950s. In the meantime, he had been one of a small group of faithful supporters, which had set up the first postwar Gaullist political party, the RPF (Rassemblement du Peuple Français). He became the RPF's general secretary in 1954 and was well placed to take part in the manoeuvring and plotting that led to the Algiers putsch of May 13, 1958, which preceded de Gaulle's return to power.

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They loved, but nobody seemed to like them to love, and to ensure their parting until the last scene, a murder, of which the hero was soon falsely accused, was committed on the stage. There were more farewells, and in the second act the lovers said "Goodbye" again but at last all ended happily. Apart from the protracted farewells, the plot is quite effective, and has considerably more substance than one is led to expect in this kind of production.

Two things were especially impressive last night. One was the music, which was much more ambitious than the normal musical comedy score. It is the work of Mr. Rudolf Friml and Mr. Herbert Stothart. The second was the amazing "mass drill" of the members of the chorus, more than 100 in number who, in one song especially ("Totem Tom Tom") was its name, roused the audience to unusual enthusiasm. The singing throughout, both of the chorus and the principals, was unusually good. The piece was received with enthusiasm.

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